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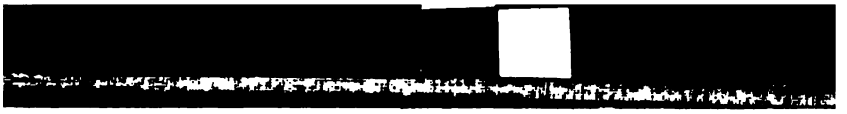
Witch's Gold

by

HAMLIN GARLAND

WITCH'S
GOLD



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"I want to pledge my life to your service—my life and all I am."

WITCH'S GOLD

being a new
and enlarged version of
"THE SPIRIT of SWEETWATER"

by

HAMLIN GARLAND

author of

Wayside Courtships,
Main Travelled Roads,
Prairie Songs, Etc., Etc.

New York
Doubleday Page & Company
1906

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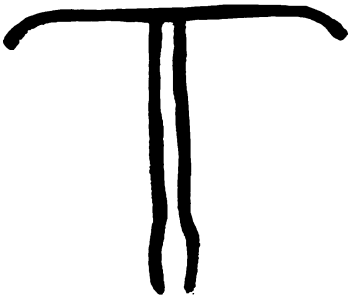

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including that of translation into foreign languages,
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To
Zulime Taft Garland,
my wife.

and
Mary Isabel,
my daughter,
I dedicate
this new
edition
of
an
old,
old
story

Author's Foreword

ONE August day some ten or twelve years ago, I was riding over the splendid road which leads from Cripple Creek to Colorado Springs, in the stage which was at that time a three-seated mountain wagon. A woman sat with the driver, and some person of no moment to me then or now, occupied the place beside me; but the rear seat was filled by two stalwart miners—or rather, a miner and a mining engineer, who furnished the only conversation during the trip. It was all about the camp, new mines and old, shafts, upraises, faulting veins and the like, and mightily interesting to me it all was, for I, too, was prospecting, seeking a "lead" with eyes

open to any piece of "float" which might indicate a vein higher up.

I had in mind to write a story showing how a man of average moral sense might find his conscience quickened by the thought of approaching marriage with a good woman. I needed a situation wherein my hero (to use the old term) would be quite within the law and yet morally culpable. I had dimly foreshadowed the scene where Richard Clement felt the eyes of his bride-elect contemplating with startled surprise a certain dubious action of his business life, and the mining engineer in the seat behind me supplied the exact theme, in a story he told of a certain mine filled with mysterious, refractory ore.

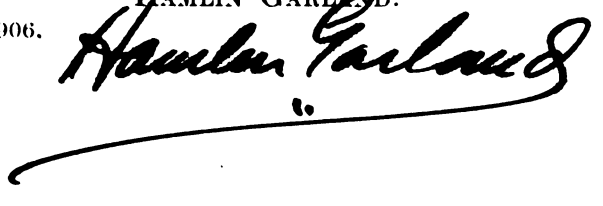
I began upon the story that night and called it "Witch's Gold." Later, yielding to the needs of a serial publication, I cut

down the story and called it "The Spirit of Sweetwater," intending to restore it to its original form in the book edition. A combination of circumstances prevented this and the story was put into a series of novelettes in the same form and under the same name as when serialized.

In this edition the tale opens precisely as it was originally written, and the reasons for restoring the original title will, I think, appear in the text. The revision of the manuscript for this present, final form has resulted in considerable new material which appears here for the first time, but the course of the love-story and the situations remain substantially the same as in the original writing.

HAMLIN GARLAND.

March 14, 1906.



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Characters in the Story

ELLICE ROSS, in search of health.

MR. ROSS, her father.

SARAH ROSS, her aunt.

RICHARD CLEMENT, her lover.

DAN MCCARTY, who "grub-stakes" Clement.

BIDDY MCCARTY, treasurer of The Biddy.

ELDRED, financier.

BODAVITZ, his lawyer.

Illustrations

"I want to pledge my life to your service—my life and all I am" . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"Her face was thin, and her head shapely, but her eyes burned like rarest topaz—deep and dark and sad" . . . 50

"There was a silence, a very awesome silence following the defiant ring of the voice" . . 202

THE MYSTERY OF MOUNTAINS

As the sun sinks
And the cañons deepening in colour
Add mystery to silence,
Then the lone traveller, lying outstretched
Beneath the silent pines on some high range,
Watches and listens in ecstasy of fear
And timorous admiration.

In the roar of the stream he catches
The reminiscent echo of colossal cataracts;
In the cry of the cliff-bird
He thinks he hears the eagle's scream
Or the yowl of far-off mountain-cat;
And the fall of a loose rock
Seems the menacing footfall of the grizzly bear;
While in the black deeps of the lower fords
His dreaming eyes detect once more
Prodigious lines of buffalo, crawling snake-wise
Athwart the stream,
And files of Indian warriors
Go winding downward to the distant plain,
Where the camp-fires gleam like stars.

WITCH'S GOLD

CHAPTER I

ONE afternoon in August a miner came out of the red jaws of a tunnel on the rounded hill-side of a Cripple Creek claim. He looked old and haggard, and was bent with digging and stained with soil and powder-smoke—but he was in fact young. Taking a seat on a rock he gazed away at the landscape with eyes which saw nothing before him.

It was nearly sunset, and he had toiled all day without food and was weak and pale with hunger. Overcome by a blinding weakness he had dropped his pick at the end of his tunnel and staggered to the daylight with only a dull despairing realisation that he had come to the end.

For weeks he had trodden his narrow way, like some incredibly patient subterranean animal, picking steadily at the red rock and breathing the close dank air of his burrow, coming only occasionally to the light, his mind set on penetrating ever deeper into the hill.

The sun had gone down behind immense clouds which rose in the west in shape like a prodigious mountain range. Behind him, luminous as moons, the smooth hills rose, while far to the south a mighty rampart of peaks lifted into the sky, cold and white and stern as marble. Below him lay the camp—a straggling row of battlemented stores with cabins of pine and aspen scattered along the sod as a child might spill an apronfull of pine blocks upon a parlour carpet. The smooth slopes were everywhere speckled with little red heaps of earth mark-

ing the spots where other hopeful and untiring prospectors had tried for gold.

Down the converging trails which meshed the blotched and ulcerated hills, men were moving like ants, their shouldered tools and swinging dinner-pails flashing in the sunlight. Blasts were booming from the emptied deeper mines like leisurely siege-guns, and a train was winding like a fleeting serpent among the lower forests—for all this land was composed of grassy mountain tops more than ten thousand feet above the sea.

The miner's cabin which joined the tunnel's mouth was a dug-out built of aspen poles in the front and roofed with sods. It contained a bunk, a small stove, a kettle, a frying pan and a knife and fork. Once it had contained a cup and saucer, but the saucer had been broken—the cup stood

alone. It was not a home, it was a den—little better than that of a fox.

For weeks this tall young man had lived upon a sort of batter made of second grade flour and water, drinking coffee without milk or sugar—and now at last he had reached a depth when not even a spoonful of this desolating fare was left him. His money was gone—much of it to the assayer and the blacksmith—and his head was swimming with weakness and hopeless pain.

He had thrown his pick aside at last. All was ended. Nothing was left him now but to beg a meal and to seek a job. He had the foolish shrinking from this which a man feels who has never borrowed without returning promptly, who has always earned every cent he spent and who owes no man anything. All the security and repose and plenty of his boyhood's home in the East

came back to him with tantalising clearness. It was all so far away.

Now that the last stroke of his pick had been made he saw how foolishly persistent, how insanely hopeful he had been.

"If I go—I must go now," he said to himself, and rose and stumbled down the trail with no clear conception of what he was doing—or where he should find food—he only knew he was hungry and chill, and there—down there where the lights blazed, was meat and fire—but not friends. He knew no one well enough to call them friends. He had never been much given to saloon life and had almost always taken his glass of beer and his dinner alone, returning to his hole in the hill with scarcely a word of greeting to any other soul.

His heavy slumping step jarred his head painfully, but he could not lighten it—his

will could do no more than guide his staggering feet down the path; he seemed about to fall on his face like a drunken man.

His trail led him across a little flat whereon a negro was placer-mining, rocking an old-fashioned cradle. Hitherto he had spoken to this man pleasantly as he passed, but now when he needed a cup of coffee and some meat, he hurried unsteadily by without so much as looking toward his hut. He was afraid the man might know that he was famishing.

As he entered the camp the smell of innumerable suppers aroused in him a fury of hunger. Through the open doorways of the little poplar pole cabins he could see men sitting at supper with their wives and children. The scant cheer, even of the tents, seemed to be luxurious beyond the reach of any one but a God-favoured mortal. The

glimpse of a woman in a home seemed perilously beautiful. On the street he was familiar only with the post office, one or two restaurants, the bar room of the principal hotel, and the grocery where he purchased his supplies—and he walked aimlessly on past them all.

It was Saturday night and the street swarmed with miners, gamblers, speculators and cowboys, but was quiet and orderly in spite of its throng. Talk was quiet and the noise of the sidewalk came to him as a murmur and a slow bustle. Men filled the saloons and gambling houses till they seemed convention halls. Roughly clad toilers sitting on nail kegs before the doors seemed to be in slow rumination of their evening meal. Others still had a hungry look and a listless dragging gait like his own. That they were tired and hungry

too he knew. One man stopped another and asked for money; and this seemed so base that the miner hurried on out of hearing as if the act might contaminate him.

In the windows he could perceive without turning his head, delicious brown loaves of bread and boiled ham and pies. The aroma of coffee allured from every open doorway. The men he passed savoured of roast pork and pudding. His nostrils, made sensitive by need, had taken on the keenness of a hound's, and his sufferings sharpened with every step. Turning, he reascended the street to the post office.

He had no expectation of a letter, but to keep his mind from food to put off his beggary for a moment, he turned in and approached the window.

"Clement," he called hoarsely.

"Richard?" asked the brisk clerk. "One—two cents due on it."

Clement recoiled as if the clerk had thrust his fist at him. His face was livid as he stammered:

"I—I haven't a cent—with me. Keep it—till to-morrow."

The clerk understood. He blustered a little to justify himself.

"Well, all right—pay it when you come next time. Only it ain't business. I get left about half the time."

Clement took the letter and opened it with trembling fingers. It was from home—in his sister's writing, a beautiful unshaded hair-line tracing, deliberate and refined. It was a message of peace and good will, expressing the hope that he was turning out the gold in nuggets as big as potatoes. It was jocose and newsy and careful, and

every word threw Clement's failure into darker shadow.

He walked down the street again with his shame still hot on his forehead. The security and peace of the house from which that letter came, and its allusion to nuggets, made him groan with self-pitying emotion.

He halted before a saloon and stood against an awning post to recover himself.

"Let me see—let me see," he muttered irresolutely like a man in a dream. "I must eat—or I'll be sick."

His dim eyes became aware of a splendid young cowboy standing in the doorway. He knew the man by sight as Black Mose, a trailer and desperado. He was dressed in a close fitting cutaway coat of black. His shoes, tie, collar were all neat and in good taste. He wore a broad rimmed black hat, his face was cleanly shaven and

his fine mustache waxed—in his chin was a fine dimple.

Clement thought, "Here is the man to help me," and started toward the young fellow, but at his first step he reeled and nearly fell, and the cowboy caught him, and looking down at him with a beautiful smile, said indulgently:

"Careful! old man—use both feet and don't mix 'em up."

Clement went off down the walk as guiltily as if he had in very truth drunkenly lurched upon the friendly youth.

As he came opposite the "Dime Restaurant" where he had eaten many meals, and heard the clatter of dishes, he thought: "Dan will give me a biscuit and a cup of coffee," but he passed on irresolutely, ashamed, afraid. As he turned and passed the door a second time, he saw plump Mrs.

McCarty waiting on the tables while Dan sat at the desk in front selling cigars and punching the tickets. He was passing the door a third time when he heard Dan laugh and this hearty roar decided him to enter.

As he stumbled over the sill and into Dan's sight, the jolly little Irishman called out:

"Good avenin', Mr. Clement. Howly turf, man!" he cried, and caught Clement by the arm. "Biddy—here's a sick mon——"

"Sick!" she called. "More like it's a soak. Lave him go, Dan. Why Mr. Clement—is it yourself?" she cried with a change of tone. "What ails ye, sure?"

Clement muttered unintelligibly as they led him to a chair at the nearest table.

Biddy studied him with experienced eyes. "Dan, 'tis not drink—it's hunger! Wait till I bring him some soup."

Clement looked up at them without a word—scarcely comprehending what they said. He waited apathetically. His cheek bones produced bluish hollows on his ghastly face, and his eyes were as piteous in appeal as those of a wounded dog. At last he made an effort to speak. He whispered huskily:

"I—I came in, Dan, to ask you to—to grub-stake me—for a week—I'll strike it in a few days—I know——"

"He wants me to grub-stake 'im," Dan explained to Biddy as she returned with a bowl of hot soup:

"Grub-stake is ut? What he wants is a beefsteak—here drink this!"

Clement took the soup in his trembling hands, and drank it like a thirsty child.

"Not too fast now," warned Biddy. "Bedad, that'll run into his blood to beat

any liquor in the world. See him hearten up! He'll be himself in five minutes!"

There was only one man left in the room, a large man with a wide, red, pleasant face adorned with a big mustache. He had sunny blue eyes and a winning smile. He rose and came over to the table where Clement sat waiting for the whirl of his brain to cease in order that he might frame a sentence of thanks and another of explanation. He knew the big man by sight. He was a prospector by the name of Kelly —Kelly of Squaw Mountain. A man who could trail up the float of a ledge as a hunter follows the slot of a deer.

"Why Clement, what's the matter with ye?" he heartily asked.

"I'm used up," Clement made slow reply. "Hungry, dead broke and sick. I guess I've been crazy too."

"Well that's tough luck," said Kelly. "But don't give up. You're fur enough down now to make a strike. All the big strikes come when a man's worked his heart into his boots and is just ready to give up. Keep at it. Your chances are good on that lead. If I hadn't more holes in the ground than I've dollars in me pocket, I'd give ye a lift on that deal."

"I think not, Kelly," put in Dan. "I was jist arrangin' to grub-stake Mr. Clement meself."

Kelly winked at Clement as if to say: "I've fixed it for you," and walked away.

"Now thin," said Dan, "to bed ye goes, and to-morrow we'll talk business."

That night was one of delicious, dreamless sleep, and when he woke Richard was himself again. By noon of next day "The Biddy Mining Company" was formed—

Richard Clement, president; Dan McCarty, vice-president; Biddy McCarty, treasurer—though Biddy was sceptical, as she had reason to be from hard experience.

"Sure that lukes well—but what shall I be when the gould comes in—a receiver?"

Clement smiled.

"We hope we'll never go into the hands of any other receiver."

As he went back up the hill to the desolate little cabin, the young miner's heart was big with hope. Kelly's words, "Ye're low enough now to make a strike" seemed to have the significance of prophecy.

CHAPTER II

NOTWITHSTANDING Kelly's oracular saying, the hill refused to yield its treasure to Richard Clement, and in his second descent to pennilessness he carried the loyal Dan and Biddy with him. They began by grub-staking him, they ended by taking desperate chances with him. All Dan's little store of ready money went first, then a mortgage was put on the eating house and its scanty furniture. This was also very soon used up in cost of tramway and tools and powder.

Clement accepted all these sacrifices with a look in his face such as gamblers wear. He knew he was stripping his friends to the skin, but he believed (with the intensity

of a maniac) that his mine would enable him to give back thousands for every dollar they put in. He toiled like a giant, and when they could no longer help, he worked on alone.

Dan had days when he utterly despaired, but Clement never gave up. He slept only to dream night after night of opening a vein which should yield hundreds of dollars to the ton. He struggled on, lending his great strength to the most arduous, unwholesome phases of the work—sparing himself in no regard. He seemed endowed with the resolution of five men. His optimism could not be called good cheer—it was grewsome like the grin of a madman. So long as he could procure food he persisted.

His influence over Dan and Biddy was sinister—uncanny. When not in his pres-

ence they sank into measureless depths and not infrequently Biddy wailed in stormy Irish fashion over their situation, but they both rallied quickly to smiles when Clement turned his rapt eyes on them, and Dan would often take up his dinner pail after he had set it down with a solemn word never to climb the hill again, for when the money gave out he had joined Clement at the mine, leaving Biddy to run the eating place alone.

At last the day came when they could not meet the payment of the interest on the mortgage, and the money lender curtly said: "Very well—I must take possession then."

That night was a dark one for the three partners of "*The Biddy.*" The president sat and stared blankly at the floor, the vice-president groaned dismally and the treas-

urer threw her apron over her head and rocked and wailed in unassuageable grief.

In the morning the creditor would take possession, but had promised to retain Biddy as cook—"Me that's been me own boss fer over twelve years—me to go back in me own kitchen an' work fer wages like a Chinee— Sure it's haird, Misther Clement—so 'tis—not that I blame you—but it's haird."

Then Clement began to talk, and though a man of few words ordinarily, he could at need "Charm the bird in the bush," Biddy said. He began with the cunning indirectness of a maniac.

"Dan—did you notice that rock to-day? It was getting softer and more moist, the last two feet almost trickled with moisture. Do you know what that means? It means we're approaching *The Golden Eagle's*

vein. I feel absolutely sure of it. The rock is the same, and you know they struck water about twenty feet before they touched the vein."

He went on and on dilating upon all the successes of the camp—how men had struck it rich with the last despairing stroke of the pick. All the minute indications of change in the rock he summed up, while Biddy forgot to weep and Dan lifted his head. It was a marvellous address. It had in it the allurement and the fascination of a gambler's plan for breaking a faro bank. At last he said:

"All is not lost yet. Biddy can earn enough to feed us on, if we keep to rye bread and beans, and we can sleep in the shack."

"But about powder—and the blacksmithing?" said Dan.

Clement smiled.

"You forget your little cocoanut bank."

Dan let out a shout.

"Sure—go bring it, girl."

Biddy looked strangely perturbed.

"Now Danny darlin'—don't be fer takin' that which we laid up agin a rainy day. Sure it's bad luck to use it fer this hole in the ground— May the divil fly off wid it!"

"Biddy, the silver's mine. I tuk it out o' meself—it's the price of drinks I didn't take. Go fetch it—sure!"

"Dan, it's gone," Biddy faltered out, red and nervous.

"Gone is it? Where gone? Who tuck it?"

"I did, Dannie."

"Ye did? Fer what now? Spake out!"

"Sure Mrs. McIlheny was wantin' me to go in wid her——"

"Fer what?"

"A lottery ticket, darlin'."

"Howly turf!" gasped Dan. "A lottery ticket, an' the two of us livin' on bread an' water. How much was it?—ye omadhaun!"

"Twinty dollars wantin' a quarter—which she lint me."

Dan went off into unintelligibility of Irish invective, while Clement looked at them both in silence. At last he said:

"Did you draw anything?"

"Faith, I don't know. I fergot about it entirely."

Dan flung his hat on the floor. This was too much.

"Well of all the gawks in the warrld! Where is it?"

She brought the ticket out much cast down.

Clement seized it.

"Let me take it. I'll find out what you've drawn."

He dashed out of the house and was gone nearly half an hour. He returned in triumph.

"We're all right!" he cried. "One of the tickets drew thirty dollars." He said thirty dollars in tones which made it seem like a thousand. "I got Kennedy to advance me twenty dollars." He laid down four shining gold pieces. "That will carry us a long way into the rock."

His will was sovereign yet—they accepted his command, and Biddy went to work in the kitchen as cook, and Dan went back to the mine to slave at his pick.

In a few days they had only one of the

coins left, and as they were going up the trail one morning, Dan took it from his pocket to emphasise some remark about their final stroke of work, and in making a wild gesture it slipped from his stiffened fingers and rolled into the grass of the hillside.

They spent hours in agonising search for that coin. They combed the grass with their fingers, and at last literally lifted the turf and sifted it. It was late in the afternoon before they found it, and Clement immediately used it in purchasing giant powder in order to make sure of it.

By Saturday night their powder was gone, they had no food, their tools were worn out, and they were thin and bent with their terrible labour. They were now at their last ditch; nothing remained but to secure another member of the firm or quit—one seemed almost as desperate as the other.

To secure a fourth member of the firm was very difficult indeed, for winter was upon them and there were fewer "tenderfeet" in the camp, and no one but a very inexperienced person would pay good money to become a part owner in a damp hole in the ground.

That night Dan and Clement started out. Clement arranged it.

"Now Dan, I'll go down street, you go up. Try every man you know. Don't skip a soul. We must raise some money tonight. I hate to let anybody in now to reap the reward of all our labour—but it must be done."

It was really a hard task which Clement set for himself—to admit even in thought some other man into his mine when they were so close upon riches. He had always been a man of powerful intuitional percep-

tion. Working alone deep in the earth had made him still more subjective. All along he had heard little voices call him from the solid wall of rock. He had visions there in the dark, and after they met and passed the water vein, he imagined he could hear in its plashing the words: "Merrily pick, pick. Merrily pick, pack." He had spoken to Dan of this conviction, but his belief in their nearness to the pay-rock was so strong he could not bring himself to speak to a single one of his acquaintances about his need of funds. For an hour he walked up and down the street, silent, aimless, busied with plans for going forward without taking on another partner.

He dared not go back to Dan without doing something, however, and at last wandered into a saloon before making final choice of subject. It was nearly eleven

o'clock, and the crowd had thinned out and the room was quiet. At one of the tables a dark, small young fellow was playing roulette with four or five gamblers looking on. He had gambled heavily and had already won several hundred dollars. His face was drawn with excitement and Clement stood watching him, saying to himself, "He'll lose it all. It'll all go back to the banker. If only we had it! It might make him thousands if he came in with us." The sight of the money led to calculations of the powder and tools it would buy and an impulse to speak to this little man came to Clement. Laying his hand on the stranger's arm the miner said firmly: "*Quit* right now. You will never have a better chance."

His voice had the ring of command, of unassailable integrity and good-will and in-

stantly impressed the young fellow, for he rose with a sigh of relief saying:

"I guess you're right. They say a man never quits when he's a winner, but I'll show 'em I can. I'd about made up my mind to do it." He cashed in, and with a grin of triumph walked off with Clement.

Neither spoke until they had passed to the opposite side of the street. Then the stranger spoke and in his tone was something unpleasant.

"You look the right kind. Where do you hail from?"

"I am from Iowa," assured Clement with effort.

"Iowa? So do I. What part?"

Ultimately, much against his will, Clement presented the case of "*The Biddy*" and offered a quarter interest therein.

The young fellow, whose name was Eldred, seemed taken with the idea.

"If your mine is what you say it is, I'll go in. That's what I'm out here for."

"You can ask Matt Kelly or any of the best prospectors to-morrow, and if they don't say it's all right, I won't say a word more." And with this they said good night and Clement went to Dan with the news of what he had done. "I don't like the man," said he, "but he is going to come in."

Eldred was early over next day and Kelly out of the goodness of his heart went with the tenderfoot to show him the mine and to give an opinion as to its value. "Without doubt, if you push deep enough, you'll tap *The Golden Eagle* vein," he said, "and as for Clement, he's as reliable as anny man with his mind set on finding gold."

On the strength of Kelly's words Eldred came in with four hundred dollars, and "*The Biddy*" resounded again with hammer-strokes and with dull thunderings and eruptions of smoke at intervals.

CHAPTER III

THEY had used up the four hundred dollars and were again working on credit, when one morning after the first blast, Clement came out of the tunnel holding in each hand a lump of ore. He staggered like a man paralysed with bad whiskey. His legs wobbled. "There she is," he whispered, offering a piece of the ore to his partners. Dan snatched it from him as a starving man seizes bread.

"There she is—God bless her!" he shouted, kissing the rock in very ecstacy of faith. Rushing a sample to the assayer's office they all hung about, forgetting time, food, everything, till he yielded up the little

shining button which lay in the cup's bottom.

"It yields about four hundred and seventy dollars to the ton," he said impassively.

The three men looked at each other and crept away like a band of burglars caught by the dawn.

"Boys," said Clement in a half whisper, "we've struck it heavy, but we've got to look out or we'll have a dozen contests to fight. We mustn't let anybody know what we've got—not now—not till we've sold some ore!"

Thereafter they toiled and sweat to secretly mine a car load of the ore. They sacked it and hauled it down to the car at night. If they could but sell a car load, they'd have money enough to fight any contest out for a few days at least. Night after night when the moon was set they

loaded their wagon with ore and drove down to the railway—moving stealthily, seeking the shadow—and at last they shipped; and thereafter they counted the hours till they should be able to hear from the car. They could not work—they could scarcely eat—they merely waited, waited.

At last the letter came and they all clustered around while Clement read off the result—so much gross weight, so much tare, so much lead, so much silver and so much gold.

"What's that?" asked Eldred.

Clement bent to the page again.

"That's what it says. Six dollars to the ton."

"There's something wrong there."

"Wrong?" shouted Dan. "We're buncoed. They stole it. Didn't every assay show over four hundred?"

"They couldn't do that. There's some mistake," Clement stated. "Some clerk has blundered."

But there was no mistake. The yield of gold bore no ratio to the assay. For the second car load they got hardly a sufficient return to pay for the expense of mining. Thereupon they sent a car load to another mill—the result was the same. Then they tried the cyanide and other processes—the returns varied somewhat, but in general each car load fell far below the assay. There was not even day wages in the last shipment they made. The assayer upon whom they fell was unshakable. "The gold was in the sample. I don't know where you got that."

Biddy and Dan were deeply discouraged, and Eldred was furious. He seemed to consider Clement culpable some way.

Clement himself was mystified but by no means defeated. At college he had been a good student in chemistry and mineralogy, and he now sat down and pondered the problem. He consulted every expert he knew. He went down and watched the ore go through the mill, to see if he could not discover the leakage. All to no purpose. Some mysterious element in the rock prevented the gold from fusing—kept it soluble, perhaps, so that it escaped with the water. On the night of his return, they all gathered around him while he told them of his investigation at the mill.

"I couldn't see anything out of the ordinary in the amalgam," he said. "It lay out there on the plates as fine as anything you ever saw. I put some in a bottle to show you." Here he produced the phial and started away from it in amazement. In-

stead of being the silvery semi-solid he had expected, the contents of the bottle had changed to a yellow-green liquid.

Dan laughed at first, but Clement's wordless astonishment and perplexity sobered him. "Phwat is it, boy? Ye look like a man bitten."

Clement solemnly answered: "Boys, I swear to you when I put that in there it was as fine a quicksilver amalgam as you ever saw. Look at it now. It's green as grass. See for yourself," he added holding it toward Dan. The big Irishman drew back as if it were a rattlesnake.

"Go awn wid it!" he shouted. "It's bewitched!"

Biddy crossed herself and whispered hoarsely:

"That's it—it's *witches' gould*—that's what it is! I'll have no more to do wid it.

The divil's in it. Take it away. It's witches' gould."

They all sat about in blank despair, their eyes fixed upon the mysterious element—awed and baffled—all but Clement, whose eyes showed a mind at grapple with an internal problem.

"I'll never give up," he quietly announced.

"I'm out of it," decided Dan. "I'll go no more into that hole. The divil is in it sure!"

"I don't believe the gold was ever in the rock," said Eldred, ever ready to criticise—to complain. "You've been fooling us." He was working himself into a fury when Dan silenced him.

"I never give up," repeated Clement. "What will you take for your shares?"

"An old hat—a pipe o' tobaccy—anything at all," growled Dan. "It's ill-luck I

see fer the man that goes into that mine!" But neither he nor Eldred believed that Clement would or could go on. "Come on Biddy, me darlin', it's us to the samp heap again," Dan added tenderly and so in silence and deep depression the three went away leaving Clement alone with his green mystery.

All night he sat pondering over his text-books, and examining the liquid. At last he began to weaken.

"Am I never to succeed? Am I always to follow close on my fleeing fortune, and never grasp even the hem of her garment?" he asked himself, and with the asking his head drooped forward and lay upon his arm. He was at the point where nothing could help him but sleep.

Richard Clement was the strong stem of

a decaying New England family tree. He was not merely the head of his family, he was its only producer, and it was because of his feeling of responsibility that he had taken up this venture in the mountain vein. He had small credit, for the cautious old farmers of his native village had no faith in mines. His brother was just making but a bare living and could not come to his aid. There was but one thing to do. The homestead must be divided and his own share sold.

He had promised never to do this. He liked to think that there was one place of safe anchorage, one little rood of ground to which he had a deep-laid right—but firmly believing in his ability to make this vein yield up his gold he was prepared to make sacrifice to his faith. A few days later he wrote to his brother directing the sale of his share

of the farm, and with this money bought out Eldred, paying him back all he put in—with which sum he professed to be satisfied.

To Dan and Biddy he returned so much as he could spare, and gave his note for the rest, and so sole owner of the mystic vein of ore, he sat down to the task of resolving it.

CHAPTER IV.

MANITOU SPRINGS is a village in a cañon, out of which rise two wonderful springs of water whose virtues are known throughout the world. The cañon itself depends from the breast of Pike's Peak like a fold in the robe of a king. Pike is indeed a monarch, lord of the vast rampart range and sentinel of a thousand miles of plain. The clouds are seldom dense enough to cloak his summit, and from the hot scorching prairie to the east the toiling husbandmen turn to the mountain's cool, snowy heights with longing eyes. His crest is a lighthouse of storms, a thing steadfast in the midst of change.

The village and its life centres around

the springs which have such quality that the Utes who once drank of them called them "Sweetwater." And each month in the year, but especially in July and August, the tired, weary and uneasy ones from the burning land below come up to sit in the deep shadow of the peak and to drink copiously of the health-giving water.

Not all are sick and weary, for many come because the mountains are beautiful and because the cañons call and the cloud-shadows have tales to tell. Those who are tired of the heat and light and monotony of the plain, come in search of that which completes their world—the heights—and the union of the level lands with the great peaks satisfies and heals.

Besides these good things there are other and more compelling joys. Young people meet around the spring to flash most inti-

mate messages across their cups of sparkling water, and love is ever present and ever active in the throngs and when the moon shines on windless nights and music echoes across the cañon and the laughter of girls drowns the ripple of the streams the springs are in fairyland. Labour seems far away and the world a perpetual love fête and summer time.

Among the people thronging about the spring that July night Richard Clement, the big miner, felt out of place. He was not at the springs for his health's sake, though there were certainly signs of age in his hair and lines of care on his strong, firm face. His strength, his resolution, his perfect health were noticeable qualities—in fact, he did not care to shout his reasons for coming. For the first time since the installation of the new machinery in his mine, *The Witch,*

he had been able to lift his head and look about him, and with this leisure came a sudden longing to rest and to mix with his kind once more, and in the trail of this desire came pleasant memories of the life at the springs which he had glimpsed once or twice on a swift flight to the capital.

Deep in his secret heart rested a hope (wordless as yet) that somehow, somewhere among those who came to the springs, he would see again a girl-face that had troubled him for a year. He had arranged his vacation for July not because it was ever hot at the mine, but because it was in July that the springs swarmed most alluringly with women, and because it was in July that he had seen, only for a moment, that beautiful young visitor. It would have troubled him had any one accused him of deliberately setting out to find a mate, and it had been much

easier to think of mixing with his kind while deep in his mine—than here among the laughing, bustling throng. There were so many women in the world, and he was shy!

He had always been a self-unconscious man, and hardly realised how widely his name had gone over the land as the possessor of millions. He supposed himself an unnoticed atom as he stood there, a little outside the flow of the stream of health-seekers and pleasure-seekers, but in this he was mistaken, for he really made a striking and very handsome figure, and many asked about him. He had the air of sombrely looking down upon his kind—of disdainfully studying them in their trivial amusements, and yet, at the moment, he was regretting his inability to meet and speak with the girls whose beauty appealed to him as of greater value than his mine.

The sun had gone behind the high peaks to the west, and a delicious, dry coolness was in the cañon, and the walks were closely thronged with what seemed to him to be a very fashionable and leisurely company—so long had he been absent from people either modish or easeful. He felt himself hopelessly outside all this youthful brilliancy and merriment. The maidens were so young, so care-free, so full of laughing defiance of the world that he feared them. How could a man of his age and character approach such delicate, flashing butterflies? Their beauty rendered him wistful, their youth made him sad.

"To them I am an old man," he said, and a desolate feeling swept over him. "I have waited too long," and turned his eyes from the gay dress of the women to a study of the men.

He perceived at length that they were not all of the same conditions. Rough, brown cowboys from La Junta and Cajon were among them, and miners in tall boots, down from the gulches for the night, stalked side by side with business men from Denver and Chicago.

As he pondered them, his memory freshened and he came to understand them better. He analysed them into familiar types. Here were a banker and his wife from Pueblo—the wife fussy and consequential, the husband coldly dignified. There a merchant from some Nebraska town—he rustic of exterior while his children, dainty of dress and very pretty, seemed the bloom on the gnarled limbs of an old tree. Occasionally a group of college-bred girls came up without escort—alert, self-helpful and serene. They saw Clement at once, and studied him

carefully as they drank their beauty cup at the circular bench before the spring. No good looking man escaped their notice and frank comment. "He can have me," said one with humorous exaggeration of her admiration—and Clement who overheard her did not know that she referred to him.

And so they came in varied stream, all Western, and of the well-to-do condition for the larger part, good-humoured, patient, and on the whole quietly joyous, notwithstanding the invalids.

The deft boy swung the glasses of water on his tripartite dipper with ceaseless splash and clink. There was a pleasant murmur of talk in which an Eastern listener would have heard the "r" sound well-defined, the lingering effect of the Scotch and German pioneers.

A good many couples were seated about

the pavilion on the benches and railings, and old men in chin whiskers with noses pointed toward each other could be seen discussing governmental policies with that fiercely determinate quality which marks the local politician, while their plump old wives in rumpled black silk gowns kept at least one alert eye upon their daughters.

Each loiterer had fed, had taken his draught of healing water—and this was the hour of pleasant gossip and repose.

Clement fell at last to analysing the action of the boy who supplied the water at the pool, slamming the glasses into the water, and setting them on the bench with a click as regular as a pump. Occasionally, however, he lost his mechanical indifference and handled his goblets as if they contained nectar, indicating thus his most generous patrons. Once he stopped and dipped the

"Her face was thin, and her head shapely, but her eyes! They burned like rarest topaz—deep, dark and sad."

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glass into the pool with his own hand—a doubtful action—and extended it with a bow to a young lady who said "Thank you" so sweetly that he blushed and stammered in reply.

This drew Clement's attention, and as the young girl lifted the glass in her slim hand he wondered how she had escaped his notice for a single moment—so pale, so fragile and so lovely was she. She had the purity, the translucence of a mountain columbine. Her face was thin and her head shapely, but her eyes burned like rarest topaz—deep and dark and sad—unutterably sad and in a curious sense unseeing.

A woman at Clement's side murmured to a companion, with a sigh:

"There's that consumptive girl again. She hasn't long to live, but isn't she too lovely to die!"

At this moment the girl turned—almost as if having overheard the doomful words, and fixing her eyes upon Clement looked upon him for a long time—impersonally as if he were a shadow. He shivered with a sudden wave of feeling which was not awe, nor compassion, nor love, but a mixture of all of these. In his soul rose the subtlest sadness in all the world—the sadness of a strong man who looks upon a beautiful young girl who is dying.

Extremest languor was in her every movement. She was dressed in dark, soft garments—very simple and graceful in effect, and her bearing was that of one accustomed to the willing service of others. Someone spoke to her and she smiled in reply, but her smile was sadder than her eyes which had in them the death-shadow.

Clement's action, the unwavering self-

forgetful intentness of his look, at last seemed to draw her soul to her eyes and she faced him for an instant longer with a look that searched him like a flaming light, then turned away and took the arm of an elderly gentleman who stood beside her. She moved slowly, as a convalescent walks when for the first time she is permitted a short stroll in the outdoor air, and so passed from sight among the strollers in the street.

The big miner roused and tense stood for a moment in doubt hesitating whether to follow or not—a sudden singular pain in his heart, as if he were losing something very close to his life. The face he had so long carried in his heart was gone in an instant, displaced by the melancholy charm of this sick girl's smile and deep internal glance.

Obeying the impulse to follow, he moved on into the path, keeping just out of ear-

shot, careless of observation. As he made way through the crowd he grew keenly aware of his heavy limbs, of his great height, of his swinging, useless hands, so long had it been since he had mingled with those in holiday attire. He grew more cautious as he went on, fearing someone might suspect him of following the girl—and yet somehow he wished her to know.

Once she turned and looked back, but was too far away for him to discern the expression of her face. That she was vaguely hoping to see him again he could not know.

He followed the father and daughter till they turned in at the ladies' entrance of the principal hotel. Not daring to follow them there, he kept on to the main entrance, arriving in time to see the girl again as she paused a moment before attempting the

stairway. It was pitiful to see her making light of her weakness even as she waited for strength to lift her foot. She smiled at her father while she pressed one slim hand against her bosom gasping for breath.

Clement longed to take her in his arms and carry her up the stairway—it seemed the thing most worth doing in all the world at that moment—but he could only lean against the desk and see them go slowly stair by stair out of sight, his hands clenched in involuntary effort.

"Who are they?" he asked of the clerk who was also watching the girl with deep interest.

"Chicago merchant, G. B. Ross. That's his daughter. She's pretty far gone—consumption, I reckon. He didn't bring her here none too soon. Her lungs are clean eaten out, they say. It looks tough to see

a girl like that go off. You'd think now——"

Clement did not remain to hear the clerk moralise, but went immediately to his own hotel, paid his bill, and ordered his baggage sent to the house in which Mr. Ross had taken shelter. He wondered at himself for this overpowering interest in a sick girl, and at his plan to see her again, but when he was interested, he was accustomed to move largely and decide promptly.

He reasoned that he would be able to see her at breakfast time, provided she came down to breakfast, and provided he hit upon the same hour of eating. He began to calculate upon her probable hours. She occupied his thought completely—all his other interests were swept away—were as if they had never been.

He struck off up the cañon where no

sound was, other than the roar of the swift little stream which seemed to lift its voice in wilder clamour as the night fell. Its presence helped him to think out his situation. He had grown self-analytical during his life in the camp, and had come to believe in many strange things which he said nothing about to any friend he had.

He had come to believe in fate and also in intuition. A powerful wish to do he now accounted higher than reason. That is to say, if a strong impulse came to him to run a shaft in a certain direction he always followed the impulse, no matter if his reason declared against it. The hidden and uncontrollable processes of his mind had given him the secret of the "witches' gold," had led him right in his shafting as well as in his selection of friends and assistants—had indeed made him a millionaire at thirty-

seven years of age. Therefore he had come to profoundly value—perhaps to over-value—the intuitional side of his nature, and to put aside calm reasoning, which was a strange habit of mind for a business man and the employer of many men.

Fate was, with him, luck raised to a higher power. What was to be would be; the unexpected happened; the expected, hoped for, laboured for, did not always happen. All around him men stumbled upon mines, while other men, more skillful, more observant, failed. Therefore he had come to believe that the man who depended on the five ordinary senses alone, was a poor thing —gold could not be smelled or tasted or reasoned from the hills—but it could be lured forth by this other finer sense which is of the mind yet beyond the mind. Therefore was it quite in harmony with his nature

that he should be absorbed in the singular and powerful desire to seek an acquaintance with the poor dying girl.

Dying! At that word he rebelled. God would not take so beautiful a creature away from earth; men needed her to teach them gentleness and submission. He had a vision of her lying still in her coffin, with that sweet faint smile on her lips, and with this vision came a powerful impulse to go to her, and putting aside doctors to say to her:

"I am the one to help you. Come with me into the sunshine and be healed."

He had never had a desire to heal before, but the fact that it was definite and deep-seated and not to be reasoned with fitted with his philosophy. He had no idle thoughts. The further fact that nothing like it had ever come to him up to this

moment, became each moment more significant.

She must not die! The wind, the mountains, the clear air, the good, sweet water, the fragrant pines, the splendid sun—these things must help her. Feeling the mystery of the world all about him, with the flaming white moonlight falling like a cataract from the deep sky, he rose to his feet and in his heart said resolutely: "I can help her and I will."

Back in the glare of the hotel rotunda, with its rows of bored men sitting stolidly smoking, idly talking, his impulse and his resolution seemed unmanly and most preposterous. It is so easy to lose faith in the elemental in the midst of the superficial and the ephemeral of our daily habit.

Since the coming of his great wealth he had scarcely allowed himself a day's vaca-

tion, and he had grown ten years older in that time and yet he was still spoken of as a young man, but he was a conscientious man, and the possession of great wealth was not without its gravities.

He had intended a visit to his home on the prairies, but that, too, had passed from his mind—or at least had been indefinitely subordinated to his new desire—the desire to know and to help this dying girl.

CHAPTER V

THIS miner was an early riser, and notwithstanding his restless night, was astir at six. The whole world had changed for him. The mine and its interests seemed far away. Life was no longer a concern of ore and amalgams, shafts and tunnels, it was a question of when he should see again a certain sad, slender woman with wan, hopeless smile. Her face was no longer strange to him, so continually, so searchingly had he thought of her during the night. It seemed that he must have known her through long years, so completely had she come to fill his life and inspire his thoughts.

For all his strength and tenacity of purpose he was a mystic—a poet, prone to take what is contemptuously called a sentimental view of man's purpose in the world, and now his idealistic self was completely roused and entirely dominant.

He was chilled by the thought that she might not be able to come down to breakfast next morning, but as her coming was his only hope of seeing her he clung to it. Eight o'clock seemed to him to be the latest hour that anyone not absolutely bed-ridden would think of breakfasting, and at four minutes past the hour he entered the dining room with studied air of unconcern.

The negro waiter motioned him to a chair near the door, but Clement pushed sternly on down the room toward a group seated in the light of one of the sunny windows. His keen eyes had instantly discerned the

presence of Mr. Ross and his daughter at this table.

Taking a seat at a table next to theirs the miner brought the girl's profile between him and the window, and the light striking through her hair glorified her till she shone like a figure in a church window. She was of those whose profile is forever young. She seemed a spirit, a being not concerned with earth as she dreamily basked in the morning glow. Occasionally her lips moved in some slow, soft answer, but her expression remained unchanged, unenlivened.

Clement was more deeply moved than ever before in his life, and yet no one looking into his cold, rather stern face could have discovered a trace of his passion, his pain. Only in the tremor of his hands was his emotion in the least degree visible.

His eyes, accustomed only to rough women, found in her delicate, sombre beauty something sacred, something of the seraph.

Her face was very thin, and her slender neck seemed weary with the weight of the heavy masses of her brown hair. Her hands were only less expressive of suffering than her face, so thin, so creamy-white were they.

The father bluff, portly and irascible, bullied the waiter, for lack of other vent to his anxiety.

"Waiter, this steak is burned—it's hard as sole leather. My daughter can't eat food like this. Take it back and bring something fit to eat."

The girl's sweet, slow reproof reached to Clement's attentive ear.

"Please don't, father." Then to the

waiter she said: "The trouble is with me. I have no desire for food," and the perturbed attendant nodded as if to say, "I don't mind him, Miss."

The father turned his attention to the country, determined to take vengeance on the weather at any rate.

"Yes, there is another fraud—this climate, this air. I was told it would help your appetite, and here you are with less than when you left Hot Springs. If I'd had my way——"

She laid a restraining hand on his arm, and when he turned toward her his eyes were dim with tears. He blew his nose and coughed, and looked away, ashamed of his weakness, after the manner of men, and thereafter suffered in silence, while the girl picked at her steak listlessly and with pitiful feebleness.

Once she turned and looked at Clement, and in her eyes lay a mystical, impersonal glow, as though she saw him far off, not as an individual but as a type of some admirable elemental creature. She wondered at his health, his power. There was something reposeful in his glance as well as in the lines of his head.

He could not fathom her attitude toward him, but he thought he perceived in her every action the expression of a soul that had relinquished its hold on things of the earth. Her desire to live was no longer personal. All that she did was for her father and her friends. To please them she ate and drank and slept—for herself she was world-weary, ready to lie down in her narrow earth bed and sleep forever, free from effort, from care.

The command to aid her came to Clement

again—came as clearly as if a voice spoke to him.

"Speak to her. Help her. Of what value is your strength, your health, if you cannot aid her?"

He looked at his great brown hand, at its veins throbbing with blood. His body was a great reservoir of power—he felt it to be so. His will was strong to do. Why should she die when he had so much life? "I would open my veins for her—anything to arrest her in her sure descent to the grave." Such was his secret thought.

Meanwhile his common sense had not entirely fled him. He perceived that they were not poor, and he reflected that the father had already tried all climates and had exhausted all the resources of medical science; and that he had quite as much red blood in his veins as any other man; and was

as ready for its sacrifice as any stranger could be. These considerations rendered the miner irresolute and kept him to his seat as they rose to go out upon the little veranda which overlooked the village and the valley to the east. He could see that the girl gazed out upon the glory of the scene listlessly, a tired droop in her shoulders, and a realisation of this filled his throat with pain.

He was not a markedly humble person under ordinary conditions, but he trembled now under the weight of his purpose. He could not formulate his address and he dreaded being misunderstood, but he was resolved to speak. Manifestly the first step was to make the acquaintance of the father.

There were limits to his insanity, for he did not follow the invalid out upon the veranda, as he had thought of doing when she

left the room. He contented himself with waiting in the lobby till Mr. Ross came down a few minutes later to get a cigar. Here was the opportunity! Plucking the proprietor of the hotel by the arm, Clement said: "I want to know Mr. Ross, introduce me to him, won't you?"

The landlord beamed with pride and joy. "Certainly, Mr. Clement." Catching Mr. Ross by the arm familiarly, he began: "Ah, good morning, Mr. Ross. Mr. Ross shake hands with my friend, Mr. Clement; Mr. Clement you may have heard of as the owner of *The Witch* and *Old Wisconse,* two of our really great producing mines."

Mr. Ross was not exactly uncivil, but he was cool—very cool. "I have heard of Mr. Clement," he said, with calm inflection, but he softened a little upon taking a second look at the powerful, clear-eyed young

fellow. "You are a renowned miner, Mr. Clement, and your mine is fabulous in its reported wealth."

The landlord expanded like one who has accomplished a good deed. "I thought you'd know him. Mr. Clement, let me say, is a square business man. Whatever he offers you is worth the price!" He winked at Clement as he turned away as if to say: "Now it's up to you."

Clement began, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Ross, for taking this liberty, but I wanted to know you and was forced to take the first chance that offered. Let me say at beginning that I have no mine to sell—I want to know you—that's all. I wanted to meet somebody outside the mining interest. I saw you and your daughter at the pavilion last night and in the dining room this morning. She seems to be not—very strong."

He hesitated in his attempt to describe his impression of her.

The father's theme was touched upon now. The hard, stern look passed out of his face—his eyes dimmed. "Yes, poor girl, she is in a bad way, but I think she's better. The air up here seems not to have made her worse, at any rate. I haven't much faith in climate, but I believe she has improved since we left Kansas City and began to rise. You see I was fool enough to take her to Europe last year instead of coming out here—and the sea air did her harm."

He had a marvellous listener in Clement, and they consumed three cigars apiece while he told of the doctors he had tried and of the different kinds of air and water they had sought, "all to no good purpose I fear. In fact I don't know what to think. It's

up and down with me, but she does not change—except to grow weaker—it seems to me." His eyes were wet and his voice tremulous.

"The truth is, Mr. Clement, the girl don't seem to care about living—that's what scares me. She's just as sweet and lovely as an angel. She responds to all of my suggestions by saying: 'Very well, papa,' and yet I can see she does it just to please me. She has lost all hope or fear. She don't seem to care whether she lives or dies only as it affects me. She is going away from me just because I can't rouse her——"

He frankly broke down, and as he wiped the tears from his cheeks, Clement felt his throat swell too tight for speech at the moment.

They sat thus for a few minutes in

silence till the young man was sufficiently master of his voice to say:

"Mr. Ross, you don't know me except as a lucky miner—but I have a favour to ask: I want to meet your daughter. I hope you won't think me presuming—but I—I'd like to talk with her."

There was something very winning in the young man's voice and manner, and the merchant replied: "I see no objection to that. It might interest her to meet a man who has stumbled upon a gold mine. Suppose we go right up now. We'll find her on the balcony."

Clement, profoundly moved by this concession, followed Ross up the stairs, not knowing what he should say to the invalid.

The girl was alone, seated in an easy chair in the sun—her head only in shadow.

The father spoke in a cheerful and tender voice, "Ellice, I want to present Mr. Clement, a young miner of the neighbourhood. Mr. Clement, my daughter Ellice."

The impossible had come to pass! As Clement bent down and took her hand and looked into her eyes, his heart throbbed with pleasure—and pain. Then once again that inexplicable sense of power took possession of him, and he stood before her calm and clear-eyed. "Don't move," he commanded, "I will draw a chair near you, if I may."

She bowed slightly and he fetched a seat while Mr. Ross continued: "Mr. Clement is the man who owns *The Witch* which is so rich that no one knows the greatness of its wealth. We've been together all the morning, and I thought it might interest you to talk with a man who hews gold out of the

earth. Mr. Clement's career is very romantic indeed."

Ellice listened, smiling the while that faint, hopeless smile, her wistful eyes fixed on the powerful big brown man over whose head the sunlight fell as if it loved him—found him akin.

"I'm glad to see you," she said in a slow murmur, and then fell into a muse.

The father looked at his watch.

"Where is Sarah?—I want to go down the street a moment."

The girl spoke in the quiet, tranquil voice of one to whom such things have no importance. "I don't know, papa. A moment ago she was saying something to me, and now she is gone. That is all I know. Never mind; she'll be here in a moment." She seemed to have forgotten the stranger. Her father said: "Perhaps Mr. Clement

will tell you about how he found his mine. You'll find it very interesting. I'll only be gone a few minutes. I'll send Sarah."

"I am all right, papa. If I need anything Mr. Clement can ring the bell for me —but I shall want nothing."

After Mr. Ross went out she added in the same gentle, emotionless way: "Poor papa! He is a martyr to me. He thinks he must sit by me continually. He seems to fear I may die while he is gone. All his worry is futile. It doesn't really matter whether I die alone or not, does it now?"

Clement leaned forward till his eyes were on a level with hers, and his voice was vibrant and penetrating as he said: "Yes, it does matter. You must not die now. What can I do for you, Miss Ross? I have the profoundest conviction that I can do you good. Let me help you."

A look of faint surprise came into her wide brown eyes. She gazed at him as a babe might, striving to comprehend a new word, while he went on with growing intensity: "Here I am, a strong young man with heart full of desire to help you. What can I do for you?"

"I think I understand you," she answered slowly. "It's very good of you, but you can do nothing. Nobody can."

"You must not say that," he sharply replied, and his voice produced in her a perceptible shock. Her white hands clenched a little and her eyes lost their vague stare. He went on swiftly, each word a node of electrical energy. "There *must* be something I can do. If it will help you, there is my arm"—he threw out his hand—"its blood is yours. It isn't right that one so

young and beautiful should die. We won't let you die. You must summon back your will. This wind and sun—and the good water will work with us to do you good. I am at your service—use me. Let me help you."

His voice moved her, and she smiled with small tears on her long lashes. "I thank you—indeed I do. You are very kind but —I despair of ever being well." She paused a moment, then added disconnectedly: "I saw you at the spring last night. I liked you—you were so big and brown. It did me good to look at you. Perhaps I have come at last—" She coughed—a weak, flat sound which made him shudder. He wrung his hands in helpless desire to check each convulsion. His face was distorted with sympathetic pain.

She tried to reassure him. "Really, I

have coughed less than at any time during the last five months."

He faced her, full of strength again. "Miss Ross, I felt last night a sudden desire to help you. I believe I have the power to help you—I don't know why—I'm not a healer." He smiled for the first time. "But I am perfectly sure I can do you good. It is absurd of course—I never had such a feeling toward any person before—It is just as strange to me as it is to you, but something tells me that if you will yield yourself into my hands I can give you of my strength."

She was looking at him now with musing eyes.

"That is the curious part of it," she said. "What you say doesn't seem strange at all. It is as if I had been wanting to hear your voice—as if I had known of you all my

life—" She tried again to suppress her coughing, and he was in agony during the paroxysm. The nurse came hurrying out, and while he waited, Clement felt that if he could have taken her by the hands he could have prevented her attack. It was a definite conviction, but not quite strong enough to lead to action. But when she was quiet again and the nurse had moved away he approached and took her small thin hand in his broad palm and said: "I'll go now. I must not tire you. But remember I'm going to come and see you, and I'm going to do you good. Every time I see you I am going to will to you some of my vitality—my love of life. For I love life—it is beautiful to live and it is unnatural that you who are both young and beautiful should be willing to die." Then with a sudden change of tone he said in a tone of stern

resolution: "I will not let you die. I am in league with the winds and the waters of these mountains and we will save you."

She lay quietly smiling after he went away, a flush on her cheek which made the pallor of her brow and temples the more pitiful. It was all very startling and wonderful—this big man's faith in his power to heal her when all the great physicians had failed. She liked him—was mildly glad of his coming. He was so unspoiled and so direct of manner. She acknowledged a dim hope that he might come again, his voice was so stirring and his hands so big and strong.

She felt no deeper interest, for she had gone beyond the reach of even the conjecture of passion. She had drifted far past love and hate and ambition, to the attainment of a certain colourless resignation to

her fate. The world once of so poignant an interest, had become merely a gorgeous, swift pageant like colours on the sky upon which she was looking for the last time, too tired, too indifferent to lift a finger to stay it in its course, even had that power been within her hand. Birth and death were mere words—faces, vague splotches of pink and brown on a moving tapestry—and yet there were times when she rebelled—when a wish to live resurged. Sometimes in the middle of the night as she lay alone in her bed a great wave of longing swept upon her, and she was forced to turn her face to her pillow to stifle her mingled coughing and sobbing. At such moments she prayed: "Oh, Father, let me live! I want to come and go like other women. Oh, dear Father, grant me a little life! I am too young to die."

These waves of passionate rebellion had left her each time weaker, sadder, more indifferent than before, and as coldly pallid almost as if death had already claimed her, and of late she could do nothing of her own will. And yet she was so innately considerate of others that she tried to meet their words of cheer, their offers of aid with smiling thanks.

CHAPTER VI

ON the night following Clement's talk with her Ellice fell asleep while musing upon the current theories of mental therapeutics of which she had heard a good deal in one indirect way or another. Perhaps if she could only believe, she might be helped; perhaps this strong personality had been sent to help her. It had been long since a man so strong, so frank, had stood before her—indeed, his equal, in certain forceful ways, had never touched her hand or looked into her eyes.

His character could be read at a glance. He came down out of the mountain heights

with the elemental vigour of wind and sun and soil about him like an aura. A man of great natural refinement, he had grown strong and simple and masterful in his close contact with nature. The clay, the toil in the darkness which might have brutalised another nature had given him a distinct majesty. Command was in his voice, in the lift of his head. There was something mysterious in his eyes, in the clasp of his hand.

"The world is all inexplicable," she said wearily. "I can only accept what comes. Perhaps God has sent this man to help me just as he sends healing water down from the mountain peaks."

Worn with all this conjecture she fell asleep, and in her dream it seemed that she was perfectly restored to health and dressing for a walk. Clement had called for her

to climb the mountains with him, and she was making preparation to go, working swiftly and unhesitatingly, moving about her room deftly, lightly, as of old—and how deliciously sweet it was to step swiftly, to find activity a pleasure once more! She was dressed in a short walking-skirt with leggins as if for a climb, and as she stood before the glass to adjust her cap, she thrilled to see how round and pink her cheeks had become, she laughed and said: "I am perfectly well and he is the cause of it."

She heard his impatient feet pacing outside on the veranda, and smiled to think how typical their action was of all husbands and wives—he waiting, she at the glass—and at the thought her face grew pinker and she turned away—no longer caring to meet her own accusing eyes.

But suddenly all warmth—all flushing—all joy left her. With a familiar creep and chill her weakness came back upon her. She could not proceed. Her hand half clothed, fell to her side, her strength no longer equal to the task of drawing on the glove. Every movement stopped, and looking within the glass again she saw herself pale, hollow-eyed, despairing. She could not lift her feet, and so, helpless as if chained to the floor, she waited while his impatient feet sounded heavily on the veranda. An agony of desire seized her—a wish to escape. She longed to go out into the bright sunlight with him, no longer indifferent. She struggled hard, but could neither move nor whisper. At last all this resolution, this rebellion, fell away. Her heart grew heavy and sick and cold. It was all over. He would wait for a while

and then go away, and she would stand there desolate, helpless, inert as clay, with life dark and empty before her.

"Oh, if he would only call me!" was her last breath of resolution.

Once, twice more the feet went up and down the veranda—then paused before her door. She heard his voice.

"Are you ready?" he called cheerily.

She struggled to answer, but could not. He spoke again and she whispered "Yes."

Then the door swung open briskly and he stood on the threshold in the streaming sunlight of the morning—so tall, he seemed to fill the doorway, brown as spring time earth, and with a smile of mastery extended his hand. "Come," he said, "the sturdy old mountains are wonderfully grand this morning. They are waiting for us!"

His fingers closed over hers, and the sun-

light fell upon her too, warming her to the heart, and at this moment while lifting her eyes to the shining peaks she awoke in her room alone. The morning sun had stolen its way through a half-opened shutter and lay warm and golden upon her hand.

At first she was ready to weep with disappointment and renewed despair, but as she pondered her dream she came to see in it a hidden promise. It had been long since she had even dreamed of perfect health, and the touch of impotence at its close had been put aside. And most significant of all a man's hand had broken her bonds and led her into the open air of the sunlit world.

This dream surrounded Clement with a glamour, a poetry which no other person possessed, and she met him thereafter in a spirit of awe and wonder, such as a child might experience upon finding one of its

dream-heroes palpably beside its bed in the full sunlight of the morning. The fear, the agony and the joy of the night's vision gave to his lightest word a changeful significance. Her heart beat faster at the touch of his hand and by this she found herself still susceptible—still capable of being moved by the sound of a man's voice—this was in effect a wave of returning life, and for a moment she glowed with hope, but a glance at her poor wasted fingers checked her smile. Her feet did not respond to her will.

And yet her heart quickened whenever his eyes met hers for they were filled with a light which was akin to the morning. How handsome he was. How glorious with health, how resolute with unconquerable physical pride. Was there anything so desirable in all the world? She did not

attempt to deeply analyse the emotion thus awakened in her, being well content to think that his charm, his inspiration lay in his embodiment of health and happiness.

He was dressed for riding, a suit of light brown corduroy with laced miner's boots, and this costume seemed to accentuate his brotherhood to the peaks.

He bent a smiling but penetrating glance upon her.

"You are better this morning, I can see that." He began exultantly. "You have risen to-day with a new resolution."

It was exactly as if he knew of her dream, and that the walk had been actual, and a flush crept into her face—so faint it could scarcely be detected—yet it seemed to her that her cheeks were scarlet. What magic was this which made her flush—she whom Death had already claimed for his own?

And with this question went a thrill of subtly sweet pleasure close-linked with her dream.

Mr. Ross invited Clement to sit with them at breakfast as she hoped he would do. The miner accepted with frankly expressed pleasure.

"I'm going for a gallop this morning," he said in explanation of his dress. "I wish you could go too," he added, addressing himself to Ellice with purpose in his tone.

"I wish so too," she replied, a little bitterly.

"Wish hard enough and you will get your wish," he smilingly admonished her.

Mr. Ross introduced Clement to the fourth person at the table, a plump and handsome woman of middle age. "Mr. Clement, let me present you to my sister,"

Miss Ross for all her plumpness was inclined to be censorious like her brother. She complained volubly of the food, of the altitude and of the chill shadows, and Clement could see that they were both very disheartening companions for a sick girl. Assiduous as they were in their attendance, devoted and loving, they yet worried her—depressed her when they should have been both comfort and encouragement. Even the nurse had caught this spirit.

Clement set himself to be the antidote. His whole manner of treatment was of the hopeful, buoyant sort. He praised the magnificent weather, dwelt upon the majesty of the mountains, and the purity of the air and water. "I love to think that we are sitting at this moment above the great cities, above the miasmas. Almost all of human kind are below us, think of that."

His words were at once exclamation and command.

"After I get back from my ride I wish you'd let me come and talk with you. Perhaps," he added, "you'll be able to walk a little way with me. This is vacation time with me and I'm a little lonesome. For years I've been thinking only of getting rich. I had no time to make any other than business acquaintances. I want you to help me forget business for a while."

He made the breakfast almost cheerful by his presence, and went away saying:

"I'll be back by eleven o'clock, and I hope to find you ready for a walk."

Miss Ross astonished both at the miner's assurance and at Ellice's silent, smiling acquiescence, watched him as he strode out of earshot, then broke forth: "Well, if that isn't the most extraordinary piece of

impudence! I wonder if that's the usual western way of meddling with somebody else's business. He seems to think he is in charge of you. He positively *ordered* you to walk with him."

"I wish I were able to obey," the sick girl quietly answered. "I like him. He interests me."

Her aunt gasped: "Well upon my soul!"

Mr. Ross interfered. "Now don't be a fool, Sarah. If she is interested in this young fellow so much the better—I rather like him myself."

Ellice spoke again with more energy in her voice than she had manifested for many months:

"Aunt Sarah, I want you to help me dress. I'm going to walk a little by and bye."

"Not with that man?" the aunt inquired in protest.

"Yes, aunt." Her voice was vibrant with fixed purpose. "If he is good enough to ask a poor thing like me to walk with him I mean to accept."

"But think how you'd look leaning on the arm of a stranger—you'd have to lean."

"Auntie, dear, I have long passed the point of caring how anything looks. What does it matter to me? I am not living now to please the world. Mr. Clement is sincere in his desire to help me. I like him—He does me good, while you tire and fret me with your endless complaining," she added with a childish petulancy.

Mr. Ross again interceded: "Why, of course, what harm can it do? I'd let her lean on the arm of 'Cherokee Bill' if she wanted to." They all smiled at this, and

he added, "The trouble has been, she didn't want to do anything at all, and now she shall do what she likes if every other woman in The Springs talks her tongue as raw as beef."

This conference by these plump, grossly-fed, elderly, practical people disturbed and depressed the girl. They coarsened and made commonplace the beautiful action of a good man—and she was ready to weep with irritation and disappointment. She could not tell them the secret of the dream which had so poignantly impressed her, and to speak of her suddenly developed faith that this big miner could help her back to health and happiness would have added to her annoyance. Already they had worn away her faint elation and she made her preparation for the walk with languid irresolution.

CHAPTER VII

HE met her on the veranda at eleven, clothed in a handsome frock suit of grey, with a broad-brimmed grey hat to match, looking like some of the pictures of western Congressmen she had seen. His coat was unbuttoned, and had the effect of draping his tall, erect figure, and the hat suited well with the large lines of his nose and chin. It seemed to her she had never seen a more striking and picturesque figure, and another faint stirring of girlish admiration came to her blood, as he said: "I was afraid they wouldn't let you come. I'll carry you down the stairs if you'll say the word," he added as they paused a moment at the topmost step.

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She lifted her big eyes to his and smiled faintly.

"Oh, no. I can walk if you will give me time."

"Time! Time is money. I can't afford it." He stooped and lifted her in his right arm, and before she could protest was half way down the stairway. As he released her they both smiled up into the horrified face of Aunt Sarah, and Clement remarked: "We are following natural impulse now."

Mr. Ross came from the rotunda of the hotel to say: "Don't go too far."

"Trust me," said Clement. "If she gets tired I'll take her on my arm and carry her home."

"'Twould be simpler to call a carriage," Ellice replied with a touch of humour which delighted her father. And so they walked

up the street side by side, up toward the spring, slowly—she with effort, he with restrained power. Turning abruptly, he said decisively, but tenderly:

"You must *think* you're better—that's half the battle. You must set yourself a mark. A place to reach. See that stream? Some day I'm going to show you where it starts. I know the place well. Up there it is uncontaminated—full of the properties that cure. Down here it is only half as good. Out there on the plain it is a dull, corrupt ditch. The legend is that if you drink at its source up there in the spring above timber-line it will cure you of every ill."

She saw his intent and said: "I'm afraid I'll be cured long before I am able to get there."

"I'm going to make it my aim in life to

see you drink at that pool," he declared, and his directness and simplicity pleased her—strengthened her faith. After this they did not talk much until they were seated on one of the benches near the fountain.

"Sit in the sun," he commanded. "Don't be afraid of the sun. The sun's rays never breed disease. The sun gives life. Beware of the shadow," and by this she knew he meant to rebuke her for indifference and despair.

He went on vigorously: "The one thing about mining which I do not like is the sunlessness of its life. I never go into my own mine without a pang of regret for the sunlight which is lost to me. You cannot afford to lose any of this sun. Let it permeate you—let it burn you—it will do you good."

She asked him a languid question about

his mine, and so encouraged, he told her of himself—of his family—of his plans.

"No, I was not educated to be a miner. My original intention was to fit myself for teaching chemistry. My father was a druggist in a village not far from Des Moines, and though it was a small business he managed to educate me, and, later, my brother. But when he died I found it involved and I tried to hold the trade he had built up and pay up its indebtedness. I kept my brother at college during his last two years, and when he came home I turned the store over to him and got out. You see he was about to marry, and the business wouldn't support two families. I was always inclined to adventure, anyway. This Cripple Creek camp was in everybody's mouth, so naturally, I came here."

His eyes glowed. "Those were great

days, the walk across the mountains was like a story to me. I liked the newness of everything in the camp, the smell of new lumber, the creak of windlasses. It was glorious to hear the hammers ringing, and see the new buildings going up day by day. Tents and shanties rose like mushrooms. It was rough here then, but I had little to do with saloons. I staked out my claim and went to digging. I knew something of mineralogy but very little about mining, but as they were striking gold all around me, I concluded my chances were good and so I kept on. Besides "—here he looked at her with a touch of shyness in his smile— "I've always had a superstition that just when things were at their worst with me they were about to be mended, so I dug away. My tunnel went into the hill on a slight upraise, and I was able to push my

car alone. You see I had so little money I didn't want to waste a cent. It was hard work but I enjoyed my life till my money was gone. Each day brought me nearer to my strike, I thought." His face grew grave.

"But my last dollar went at last for powder and the sharpening of picks, and for assaying—and one morning, three years ago, I found myself without money and without food."

He paused there, and his eyes darkened with remembered despair, till she was touched with sympathetic pain.

"It must be terrible to be without food and money."

"No one knows what it means till he experiences it. I worked all that day without food. It seemed as if I *must* strike the vein then. Besides, I took a sort of morbid

pleasure in abusing myself—as if I were to blame. I had been living on canned beans, and flapjacks, and coffee without milk or sugar, and I was weak and sick—but it all had to end. About four o'clock I dropped my pick and staggered out to the light. It was impossible to do anything more."

There were tears in her eyes now, for his voice unconsciously took on the anguish of that despair.

"I sat there looking out toward the mountains and down on the camp. The blasts were booming from all hills—the men were going home with their dinner-pails flashing red in the setting sun's light. It made me angry to think of them going home to supper while I had none. It seemed impossible that I should be sitting there starving, while the grass was so green, and the sunset so beautiful. I can see it all

now as it looked then, the old Sangre de Christo range was like a wall of glistening marble to the west.

"Well, I sat there till my hunger gnawed me into action. Then I reeled down the trail. I saw how foolish I had been to go on day after day hoping, hoping until the last cent was gone. I hadn't money enough to pay the extra postage on a letter which was at the office. The clerk gave me the letter and paid the shortage himself. The letter was from my sister, telling me how peaceful and secure life was at home; they had little money, but they had food, and it made me crazy. She asked me how many nuggets I had found. You can judge how that hurt. I went down the street seeking food—I must eat or die, I knew that."

"Oh, how horrible!" the girl exclaimed.

"There was one eating-house at which I

always took my supper. It was kept by an Irish woman, a big, hearty woman whose husband was a prospector—or had been. 'Biddy McCarty's' was famous for its 'home cooking.' I went by the door twice, for I couldn't bring myself to go in and ask for a meal. You don't know how hard that is. It's very queer, if a man has money he can ask for credit or a meal, but if he is broke he'll starve first. I could see Biddy waiting on the tables—the smell that came out was a most delicious and tantalising odour of beef stew—it made me faint with hunger."

His voice grew a little tremulous as after a pause he resumed. "When I entered Dan looked up and said respectfully, 'Good evenin', Mr. Clement,' and I felt so ashamed of my errand I turned to run. Everything whirled then—and when I got

my bearings again Dan had me on his arm and Biddy was holding a bowl of soup to my lips."

The girl sighed in relief. "Oh, how good of them!"

"Wasn't it? They could see I was starving. As soon as I could speak I told them about the mine—and, well, some way I persuaded them to 'grub-stake' me that night."

"What is that?"

"That is, they agreed to furnish me food and money for tools and to share in the profits. Dan went to work with me, and do you know, it ended in ruining them both! We organised a company called the 'Biddy Mining Company.' I was president, and Dan was vice-president, and Biddy was treasurer. Biddy kept us going by her eating-house, but eventually we wanted ma-

chinery, and so we mortgaged the eating-house, and the money, every dollar of it, went into that hole in the ground. But I knew we would succeed. I was perfectly sure of it. Whenever I was alone I could hear little voices in the rocks calling me to keep on. I wonder if that seems foolish to you. Perhaps I am a miner after all—for miners, like railway engineers, have queer fancies—they feed on chance." His eyes, turned upon her, were full of mystery.

"I have always felt the stir of life around me in the dark, and there in that mine—after we struck the spring of water—I thought I heard voices all the time in the plash of the water. 'Merrily pick, pick,' they seemed to say. I suppose it bordered on insanity, for I ruined Dan and Biddy without mercy. I couldn't stop. I was

sure if we could only hold out a little while, another day, we would open the vein. But we didn't. Biddy had to go to work as a cook, and Dan and I went out to try to borrow some money. I couldn't bear to let a stranger in after all the heat and toil which Dan and Biddy and I had endured, but it had to be done. We took in a fellow from Iowa by the name of Eldred and went to work again.

"One day after our blast I was the first to enter, and the moment that I saw the heap of rock I knew we had opened the vein. My wildest dreams were realised!"

"And then your troubles ended," the girl said with a tender smile.

"No indeed, for now a new complication arose. The assayer tried our ore again and again finding it very rich, but when we shipped to the mills we got almost no re-

turns. We tried every process, but the gold seemed to slip away from us. Finally I took a carload and went with it to see what was the matter. I followed it till it came out on the plates—that is where they catch the gold by the use of quicksilver spread on copper plates—and it seemed all right. I scraped some of the amalgam up and put it into a small phial to take home with me. When I got home the company assembled to hear my report, and when I took out the amalgam to show it to them it had turned to a queer yellow-green liquid.

"I was astounded, but Dan and Biddy crossed themselves, their superstitious fears aroused. 'It's witches' gold,' Biddy said. 'Dan, have no more to do with it.' And witches' gold it remained to them. They gave up all rights to me and went back to work in the camp. Eldred cursed me for

getting him into the hole and so they left me to fight it out alone. I was like a monomaniac—I never thought of giving up. I sold my share in the homestead to raise a little money and with that I bought in all the stock of the 'Biddy Mining Company,' and went to work to solve the mystery of the amalgam. You see I had been a good pupil in chemistry at college, and I put my whole life and brain into that mystery till I solved it. It took me five months and left me deep in debt, but I won. I found a way to treat the ore so that most of the gold was saved. I renamed the mine *The Witch,* and it has made me rich."

"It is like a fairy tale! What became of your faithful friends, Dan and Biddy?"

"I made Dan the foreman of the mine, and I built a big new hotel for Biddy. Dan is with me yet, happy and prosperous."

He had a sudden sensation of heat in his face as he leaped the chasm between the withdrawal of Dan and Biddy from the firm and his solution of the amalgam. He did not care to dwell upon the fact that Eldred still had suits pending to recover his stock, claiming that it was bought in under false pretences. Neither did he care to enter into the stormy time which followed the sudden leap of *The Witch* from a haunted hole in the ground to a cave of diamonds. He hurried on to the end while she listened in absorbed interest like a child to a wonder story. Then she sighed in the world-old manner of women, and in reply to a question from him, replied:

"I?— Oh, I have done nothing worth telling. I ruined my health by over-study and careless living at school, and here I am, a cumberer of the earth. How perfectly

inane and worthless I must seem to men who dig in the hills as you do. You are facts, factors. I am only a shadow soon to pass away."

Some men would have hastened to be complimentary, but Clement remained silent, trying to understand and meet her mood in some helpful way, and she, feeling the rebuke in his silence, added in a firmer voice:

"But if I am permitted to live I shall be different. I can't dig gold or build bridges, but I will do something."

"First of all, get well," he said, and again his words had the force of a command. "Give me your hand."

She complied, and he took it in a firm clasp. "Now I want you to promise me that you'll turn your mind from darkness to the light, from the cañons to the peaks

and that you will determine to live. Do you promise?"

She smiled and the warm blood again tingled in her cheek. "I promise."

He dropped her hand and rose. "Very well. I shall see that you keep that promise."

They returned to the hotel in silence, threading their way through the throngs of those who were converging to the sparkling spring with bottles, jugs and cans, minded to secure their noonday draught of water.

At the foot of the stairway he stooped without a word and took her in his arm and she rested her slim left arm upon his shoulder like a tired trustful child. "How pitifully light she is!" was his thought.

As he put her down beside her easy chair she exclaimed: "How strong you are! You carry me as if I were a doll."

"That's what comes from the use of pick and shovel," he replied, with a downward flashing glance. "You must sleep well to-night. I shall expect you to be better to-morrow."

And with that he left her.

Meanwhile Sarah Ross went to her brother in restless indignation. "Ben, this is scandalous. I don't see how you can think of allowing Ellice to be taken possession of like this. It's uncivilised."

"Well, let's try the uncivilised for a while," he replied. "We came here in complete despair. Just keep that in mind, Sally. We had tried the civilised till Ellice had no interest in anything on earth and no fear of death. I've heard you say a hundred times: 'Oh if we could only interest the child in something'—and now——"

"I know I have, but I didn't mean to

have her scandalising us all in the eyes of our neighbours——"

"But these are not our neighbours—and if they were, what does it matter?" he slowly replied. "I tell you I am grateful to this young fellow; I'd be grateful to a red Indian if she were interested in him. She's better. That's enough for me. The fact that she remembers the man gives me hope. Furthermore, Mr. Clement is a millionaire —a great catch—whereas Ellice is a poor, thin, pale daughter of a hard-working merchant who can ill afford to be here. I don't pretend to understand his interest in our poor child when he might take his choice from the beautiful and rosy girls swarming about here. Be reasonable now. I have offered all I own to any physician who would give me back my daughter. I've gone beyond any tom-fool notions of con-

ventionality—if this young fellow interests her—does her good—makes her smile——"

"But you don't know what he may demand."

"I don't care what he demands if only his demand stirs *her*."

Sarah Ross admitted the force of this, and yet she could not but wince and grow hot with indignation when Clement joined Ellice in the hall or helped her down the stairway. She was sensitive to remark also —and there was plenty to overhear, for the permanent guests soon knew them both by sight and began to build a pretty romance about them.

"They were lovers years ago, but he was poor and they were separated. Now that he is rich the father relents—but too late. She is dying of consumption, poor dear." In such wise the story ran, and though Aunt

Sarah struggled sharply to discredit it, the fiction persisted.

As for Clement, he was a man reborn. He was conscious of no other pursuit, no other time. All his waking hours were given to devising ways and means to interest and benefit his love. Each day they met at breakfast, and each day at ten o'clock they walked, and then when the mid-day storm-clouds rolled round the great peak, they sat on the little balcony and watched the majestic struggle, till the lightning ceased to flame, the thunder to roll, and the sun broke forth once more, then she went to her couch to sleep, while he rode away on his swift horse into the cool, rain-wet lower levels of the valley, too sublimated in thought and purpose to speak with any other human being.

CHAPTER VIII

SEEING his daughter's slow but sure improvement in health, Mr. Ross took a cottage which stood just above the hotel and brought from home such of Ellice's furnishings as he thought would please her, and in this home Clement was a constant visitor. From the terrace they often sat to see the sun go down. He took many of his meals with them, and secure from observation watched the colour come back to the sick girl's face. Day by day a sweet content, a delicious relaxation came to Ellice. She began to take an interest in housework, and this was a great joy to her father. Once she said to Clement: "I must be get-

ting well. The days go quickly now and I feel so much stronger."

"Before I met you I was a miner. Now I am merely your physician."

"It is a good thing you are not dependent on your fees," she laughingly remarked and asked: "How do you like your new profession?"

"I find it absorbing," he replied. "I think I have a call to it."

One by one the weeks went by and one by one the cottages were closed and the hotels emptied. Autumn was near and the people of the plain, fortified by their stay in the high places, returned to their dull little towns to talk of the air and water of the peaks as those who have dreamed pleasant dreams recount them in the midst of toil. Clement could not find time nor resolution to make the visit home which he had

planned, and was hard pressed to find excuses with which to answer his sister's reproaches.

How could he leave now when every day showed most fascinating increase of colour and love of life in Ellice? She had come to count upon him more largely than upon any other human being—that he could see. And she to him was both sun and moon—so all other concerns waited on this contest between love and death.

Obscure reports of all this reached Biddy and Dan and they had their jovial fling at "the new member of the firm," but they did not repeat their jokes, for his seriousness awed them. Eldred made a visit to the springs, shrewdly calculating that this was the time to push his suit—now while his opponent was absorbed in a love affair. He had found allies in a firm of

lawyers in Denver who were hardly better than blackmailers, and together, they began their campaign of lying and vilification.

Hitherto Clement had paid but little attention to Eldred's attempt to blacken his reputation, but he now became very uneasy lest Ellice might be the recipient of anonymous letters—for his enemy was quite capable of such warfare. There was but one paper in the state willing to publish articles against him—and that, happily, was one which neither Mr. Ross nor his daughter would see unless marked copies were sent to them.

To warn Mr. Ross was his first action after one of Eldred's abusive letters. He told the merchant the substantial facts in the case and said: "This man and his partners say they are determined to bring

the whole contention into court, but knowing they have no case they are likelier to attack me in the hope of getting blackmail. In case they send anything to you or to your daughter remember that the facts are precisely as I have stated them. I would not have your daughter read these lying articles for half my mine—and yet, I dislike yielding to such rogues."

"Don't do it," protested Ross. "I believe in opposing every such man and his graft. We know and trust you perfectly. Be quite easy on that score."

One day a short, stout, smiling man with black beard accosted him in the hotel rotunda. "Are you Mr. Richard Clement?" he asked.

"I am."

"I would like to have a talk with you. My name is Wenowski—Paul Wenowski,

late of Chicago, now of Denver. You have heard of me—yes?"

Clement looked down upon him in silence till the smile froze on the other man's lips. "Yes, I've heard of you. You are Eldred's lawyer. No, I have nothing to say to you. Nothing to talk about, nothing to argue upon and no compromise to make. I know your ways of business and if you pluck me by the arm again or speak to me again I will pitch you into the street."

He was very angry and the blackmailer slipped away and troubled him no more.

It was not so easy to get rid of his own sense of unworthiness as he went into his love's pure presence that evening. "How far away she is from all passion, all envy, all deceit," he thought as she met him on the terrace where she had been reading.

She had become marvellously acute in

divining his moods and after a glance into his face she said: "You're troubled. You're not quite yourself to-night."

"A business matter," he answered. "It's really nothing, but it did annoy me a little. I will forget it. You shall be *my* physician to-night."

"That will be a privilege—and besides I am so nearly well now that I must begin to do for those who have done so much for me."

She was indeed beginning to glow again with the warmth and colour which was hers by right of youth. A delicate roundness was coming to her cheeks. Her bosom was borne with marked buoyancy and grace, and as he looked upon her Clement's blood stirred with an exultant realisation that she was no longer an invalid and that to him she owed some part of her miraculous re-

covery. In this mood he said: "It is almost time for us to make our pilgrimage to the sweet water pool."

"I am ready any time," she replied. "Let us go to-morrow."

"Perhaps not to-morrow—but soon. It is a long, hard climb and we must wait till you are able to ride far. I do not think it proper to approach it on a burro."

She coloured. "You think I cannot ride a horse but I can. When am I to be allowed to resume my habit?"

"Any time now," he said. "I have just the horse for you."

"Oh, have you! Then let me begin to-morrow."

"Very well—if your doctor and your family consent."

"Are you not my doctor?"

"I will be your riding master."

"I'm not sure I like that—riding masters are very autocratic."

"I think we may begin to-morrow," he said, and his tone was gravely tender. "You seem wonderfully well to-day. You are so young and lovely I am afraid of you. I cannot believe that you really *are* my patient."

She laughed at him in comprehension. "I am *not* the thing I was. I don't understand it myself—but to-day as I woke from my afternoon nap I fairly leaped to my feet. I felt like dancing. I could dance now——"

"Don't—please don't!" he called in alarm. Her amusement deepened. "Oh, I'm not really going to try—now—but I am going to dance with you some day just to show you I can do it."

"You'll have to teach me first."

"Can't you dance?"

"I could if I knew how, as Dan would say; 'I've the strength fer it'!"

"You teach me to ride and I'll teach you to dance— Is it a bargain?"

"A solemn pledge," he answered, but something in his look caused her to say: "You think I'm hysterical but I'm not. I'm only gay. I *know* I'm going to get well. Hitherto I've believed it because you made me believe it, now I am believing it for myself."

CHAPTER IX

THEREAFTER as Ellice grew in strength Clement lost in assertiveness—in his feeling of command. His relationship with her was no longer simple. So long as she wore the dress of the invalid his motives had been simple, direct and very lofty. She was then a soul under conviction of decay, but he began now to perceive that she was a distinguished character, that she stood in better social position with a far wider knowledge of the world than himself.

The distinction of his newly acquired millions grew to be a very poor possession in his own opinion—and at last as he acknowledged his love for her and his hope of winning her he finally reached such self-con-

fessed poverty of mind, such grossness of body that he wondered at her continued toleration of him. The part he now played had an element of hypocrisy in it. He was her lover in a very human way. A certain guilt attached to the keen disturbing pleasure which the touch of her hand now gave him. Once that hand was cold—an object of mournful beauty, now it was pink-palmed, magnetic, with the feminine appeal.

He wondered whether she was aware of his fall from the fine impersonal dispassionate attitude of his first meeting, and whether it would not seem to her a base thing to know how completely he had lost sight of the invalid in her and how deeply she stirred him as a woman.

Her returning sense of humour, her gentle raillery, disconcerted him. At times she fairly bewildered him by a kind of girl-

ish coquetry—but these moods were not frequent, for the most part she kept to the gentle gravity of her first manner.

As she no longer needed his arm for support he found it a kind of treason to offer it as an act of gallantry. In fact, in that small act was typified the change which he had now assumed. At first she had seemed to him like an angelic child. Death's shadow had made him bold—had kept him impersonal, high-natured, but now, having come to love her in this indefensible absorbing fashion, every word he spoke seemed to have a double meaning. He referred but seldom to his mission and his visits grew more and more measured, carefully accounted for.

As for Ellice, if she perceived this change in him she remained serenely untroubled by it. She spent many hours sitting with

smiling lips and half-shut eyes, thinking of her lover. She imagined herself drifting back to life on a current of mountain air, companioned by splendid clouds. Her content was like to the lotus-eaters' languor—it held no thought of time or tide.

That she idealised the young miner was true. He was a constant source of surprise to her. His grace, his dignity, his innate delicacy charmed her. All the small amenities of conduct which he had once possessed came back to him. His thought rose easily to the highest things. He never mentioned business unless she asked a question.

He, on his part, studied now to please her as he had once studied to bring back her love of life. He did not exactly abandon his business, but he came to superintend his superintendents. His mine was a source of deepest satisfaction and the fact that he

could trust Dan to run it gave him continued leisure. However, by means of a telephone line he was able to direct each day's doings from his hotel. He permitted himself the luxury of a suite of cheerful rooms and little by little assumed the position to which his income entitled him. He set aside a certain time each day for books and magazines, struggling hard "to catch up" with the latest literature in order that he might meet his love on common ground. If she referred to any author, even in the most casual way, he made mental note of the name and ordered a set of his works at once.

He apologised occasionally for this. "I know something of chemistry and mineralogy, a smitch of geology, and a whole lot about milling processes, but very little of art and literature," he said to her once.

"But give me time, I am not so hopeless as you might think. My training at college was not entirely bad. I can read and I can remember what I read. So much for a good habit."

"But think of it!" she answered. "I know *only* books."

These were glorious days for them both. She was able each day to walk a little farther up the cañons and to sit a little longer in the sun. She ate with better relish and at last Mr. Ross decided to purchase a house in Colorado Springs in order that his daughter might make herself permanently at home. He was confident now that she was going to get well, but the doctors all agreed that she must continue to live in an atmosphere which was tonic.

She took decided interest in the house and in the rearrangement of its furniture. The

home stood on a bold bank overlooking the valley and her own windows faced directly upon the mountains. The dining room also permitted a view of the peaks. Ellice admired the house with its wide sunny rooms, and said that her only objection to leaving the cottage at Manitou lay in the thought of the long miles it put between herself and the magic pool.

To this Clement replied: "There are the street cars to the foot of the trail."

"But wouldn't that take away the spell?"

"There are no wheel-marks on the trail," he answered enigmatically. "It does not matter in what luxury we cross the valley; to reach the magic fountain we must climb."

The new house was of redstone, with a tiled roof, a fine square, simple structure in the "modified Mexican" style, and possessed a broad piazza which gave a most glo-

rious view of the range, and every afternoon at five Clement took tea with Ellice, after which they often went for a short walk before dinner. Each morning, unless prevented by some unavoidable business, he took her out on horse-back. Each day these rides grew longer and her mastery of her horse more noticeable, but Clement put off the visit to the spring. "You must be able to gallop hard for ten miles first," he kept repeating, but in truth he had other and much more important reasons for delay.

One by one the autumn flowers bloomed and seeded and one by one the happy days slipped by like golden beads on a silver thread. The higher peaks whitened with snow now and again—each time a little deeper, but the sunlight still fell warm and yellow on the floor of the broad veranda. The mountains seemed to grow in majesty

as they took on their capes of ermine and the air was each morning more crystalline.

Clement, with eyes to these changes, knew that the visit to the spring could no longer be safely postponed; therefore, one especially beautiful warm morning he said:

"Are you feeling particularly well this morning?"

She turned to him with glowing, expectant face. "Yes. Why?"

"Because this is the day we go to the magic pool."

"At last!" she exclaimed, feeling the excitement in his own voice. "I'm so glad."

"Very well. I will send the horses on ahead and we'll drive to the foot of the trail."

"Oh, no! I want to ride the whole way."

"I am afraid it will not be wise."

"I feel perfectly well to-day, please let's

not spoil the trip by driving. I have a sentiment against it."

"What would the doctor say?"

"The doctor—do you still heed what he says?"

He laughed. "I have a confession to make—I have deceived you. The legend says that in order to have the water heal you you must walk. But I will lead my horse for you to ride on the downward trail in case you feel the need of it. We will ride to the foot of the trail, then, and walk the rest of the way."

She drew herself up with a gesture of physical pride. "I feel able to walk the whole way to-day."

With a glance which rose from her proud bosom to her sparkling eyes he exultantly replied: "I believe you could do it—but all the same we would better ride to the foot

of the mountain. There is no virtue in walking through the highway."

In such spirit they galloped away side by side, and they had lost none of their gaiety as they set off up the mountain road. On all sides the frost-painted foliage sparkled. Above them the great snow-white crest of the peak glistened in a cloudless sky. The stream at their feet sang in a tumult of laughter, a riot of rushing, sweet water, and the girl's heart overflowing with rapture of the beauties and love of mysteries about her, performed prodigies of valour. She fairly danced up the path, and Clement, who was behind with her horse's rein over his arm, became apprehensive and called out:

"Not so fast! It is a long way up there. I warn you the spring is almost at timberline."

To this warning she paid small heed. With shining face she replied: "I feel so light, so active, it seems as if I could never tire."

"Yes, I know, but it is always harder to come down the hill than to go up," he replied out of the fullness of his experience.

For a time they kept to the wide road which climbed steadily, but at last he called to her.

"Here we enter the trail," he said, indicating a narrow path. "Lead on and I will follow."

"Not too far ahead," she exclaimed, the least bit alarmed.

"Only two steps," he answered, amused at her sudden timidity. "Just so I may not tread on your heels."

"You needn't laugh. I know you hunt bears up here and I don't want to be eaten

up—especially not now when I am about to be healed by the magic springs."

"I am just as anxious to save you from the bears as anyone," he answered. "Besides the bears have all been killed—more's the pity."

They climbed for some time in comparative silence and at length came out upon a pleasant grassy slope.

"Oh, how much prettier it is up here!" she exclaimed, her eyes bright with excitement. "Did you ever see more beautiful colour? It is fairyland. See the jewels under my feet." She pointed down at the gold and bronze and scarlet and ruby of geranium leaves and grouse berries. "I didn't know the heights could be so beautiful."

He smiled indulgently. "You tourists think you know Colorado when you've

crossed it once on the railway. This is the Colorado which the traveller seldom sees."

She was in rapture over the glory of aspen, the waving yuccas of the hillsides, and the radiant dapple of light and shadow beneath the groves of firs. The cactus and the ever-present sage bush of the lower levels had disappeared, ripened crow's-foot and blue-joint grasses swung in the wind like golden grain. The bright flame of the painted cup and the purple of clumps of asters still lighted up the aisles of the pines in sheltered places.

"There are many more in August," he explained. "The frost has swept them all away. To know all the mountain's charm you should come every day in the year. There is a wonderful music here in the spring when the snow begins to melt

and the falling streams drip and tinkle and roar. It's like the invisible movement of a fairy army."

"Is this the stream from our spring?" she asked.

"Yes, we cross it many times before we come to the spring itself."

"How amber clear its ripples are! It really looks like the elixir of life. May I drink now?"

"Are you very thirsty?" he asked, reluctantly.

"Yes—may I drink?"

"Can't you wait? It will be so much sweeter when you reach the spring." He came closer to her and studied the heaving of her bosom. "Are you tired?"

"Not at all."

"You must not do too much," he tenderly admonished. "If you find yourself out

of breath, stop and ride. I feel my responsibility very deeply to-day."

"I want to be thirsty. I want to walk and I'm going to drink of the spring as you prescribe it."

He laughed. "By the way you lead me up this trail I begin to think you need a sedative. I never finish wondering whether you are the same girl I first saw at the fountain."

She flashed a glance back at him. "I'm not, I assure you. I'm another person. I'm made over entirely new."

"That shows what three months of this climate will do."

"Climate did not do it."

"What did do it?"

"You did," she kept marching steadily forward, her head held very straight indeed, "Doctor Clement."

"I wish you would wait a moment," he pleaded with eager wish to meet her eyes at that instant.

"I am very thirsty—I want to reach the spring."

"But, dear girl, you can't keep this pace."

"Can't I? Watch me and see."

She seemed possessed of some miraculous strength for she mounted the steep trail into the rarefied air—each moment thinner—as lightly as a fawn, and Clement in an agony of apprehension lest she should over-task her lungs and fall fainting in the path, kept close behind her checked and hampered by his horse's bridle-rein. His own heart was gay from the effect of her mystic glance, her happy words, and his eyes followed her lithe figure with the lover's pride and joy mixed with the apprehension of the physi-

cian responsible for the welfare of a patient.

It was past noon when they came out of the aspens and pines, into the little smooth slope of meadow which lay between the low peaks which were already crusted with snow. In the midst of the orange and purple and red of the grasses lay a deep, dark pool of water—as beautiful as his sweetheart's eyes, it seemed to him.

"There is the spring," Clement called to the girl. "There bubbles the water of life."

"I knew it," she said, "and oh, I am thirsty."

"Wait," he called out. "I must drink with you. Only in that way will the draught bestow health."

He hastened to the edge of the pool and dipped a cup into the water and handed it

to her. "Don't touch it till my own is filled," he warningly repeated. Then raising his own cup he solemnly added: "Now let us drink confusion to disease."

She touched her cup to his and their eyes met. Then she cried out: "Confusion to every ailment in the world," and drank.

"Confusion to sorrow!" he said.

The flush on her cheek deepened as she looked upon him, so strong, so handsome, so confident—and so tender.

"Oh, isn't it delicious? I must have another."

He filled the cup again. "Now I want to drink to you—" he said, solemnly, "I want to pledge my life to your service—my life and all I am."

She grew a little pale. His intensity of emotion, his gravity awed her and she was very serious as she answered: "I don't

think you ought. I don't think I am quite worthy."

"Let me be judge of that." He spoke quickly, almost sharply. "Shall I drink?"

She drew back a little from the ardour of his eyes and stood leaning against the browsing horse. After a little hesitation she answered archly: "If you are very thirsty."

He drank, then came straight toward her. "Henceforth I am entirely yours," he said, and in his eyes was demand as well as worship.

She shrank from him in sudden timidity and weakness, saying a little hurriedly: "Help me into the saddle, I think I must ride down, I *am* tired I find."

His face took on lines of deep concern.

"You must not give way to that feeling. Remember the magic draught."

He placed her upon the horse and after a little rest, with the bridle rein on his arm, began the descent in silence, which she seemed to desire.

Over them the great snow peaks took on the golden light of afternoon, and the shadows deepened in the cañons below, the stream sang with a graver note and in the man's heart was the uneasiness of one who has yielded to an impulse to claim that to which after all he has no right. On the girl's face lay the smile of a musing sovereign. She who had given up both love and life was about to be wooed as other women were, by a lover whose passion had no trace of pity!

The realisation of his desire, his change of attitude filled her with pride, with exultation. Truly the world was a good place after all and it was rapture to be alive.

CHAPTER X

BUT this rapture did not last. She went to the solitude of her room that night troubled by a thought which she had put aside till this moment as a bridge in the distance—a bridge which she might never be called upon to cross. This decision involved a question of her right to be a wife. Being a woman and a thoughtful woman she could not go blindly, led by her newly acquired rapture, into a relation that might mean transmission of her weakness to other and innocent little beings.

She awoke to the necessity of knowing the exact character of her ailment. If it were of such a kind as all the medical world agreed could be inherited— "Then I must

go my way alone," she decided with a pang of fear at her heart, and as she looked into the future and saw herself growing old alone and childless, the glow of health which had come back to her seemed a mockery—an ironic punishment.

She revolted from this. "It can't be that," she exclaimed. "I am well. I feel health in every drop of my blood. Whatever my weakness I have conquered it. I *know* I am to grow stronger."

It was hard to seek counsel on such a point. She resented the necessity bitterly—and yet her mother had died early in life—perhaps from some inherited weakness. Oh, that mysterious and potent law which forces the child to partake of the weaknesses as well as the strength of the parent!—was it to come now between her love and its fulfillment?

She met him at a dinner the next day, outwardly the same but with an inward difference. Her clear eyes confronted him with the same confidence, but her lips betrayed a new and subtle distraction. Her thought was less collected, her mind fitful. His near presence now brought a weakness to her feet—a sweet charm to her heart.

She spoke of the spring and the draught of its water laughingly, but yet seriously as making an epoch in her life. "I am no longer an invalid," she said. "I do not intend to presume on my family and friends. I am going to put all my sick life away. I don't want anyone to ever remind me of it."

To this he agreed with instant enthusiasm. "Quite right. We will ride every day and very soon I want you and your father to come over to see my mine."

"I should like to do that," she replied sincerely. "When shall it be?"

"When you are quite recovered from this trip," he answered.

He went away conscious of having been precipitate and in a sense unwarranted and base. He had descended from the high plain of his pitying, impersonal love to the level of the suitor and in this lay great danger of misconception on her part. Might she not properly accuse him of deception, of having won her confidence as a physician only to abuse it as a lover? "No matter," he said shamelessly, "I will not let her go."

As it had taken him a certain length of time to convince himself that the mine was safely his own, so now it seemed (when absent from his love) that someone, some mischance was about to rob him of this exquisite

woman whose slender hand had power to crown his life with laurel. There was something in her manner which troubled him. She was not less tender, but she seemed more guarded—more constrained.

His feeling of unworthiness deepened as he studied her from this new angle. She was so free from any stain of life's battle. There were many questionable places in his own life.

Silently, subtly and with a constantly brightening glow, her radiant purity of soul streamed in upon his brain, revealing to himself his most hidden motives. He had always been a decent and honourable man, as the honour of business men is measured, but an uneasy sense of wrong-doing began to disturb his complacency, and just as he was dropping off to sleep at night the question of moral right in connec-

tion with his acquirement of *The Witch* came into his mind. "I did not tell her all the facts in the case," he admitted, and the thought of laying bare all his calculations and inferences at that point made him shiver a little. Acts that seemed legitimate enough in the world of men would not bear translation into the terms of her world.

This feeling of dissatisfaction with himself was intensified by a long letter from Eldred threatening a new suit, and when he met her next day he no longer assumed to dominate her—on the contrary, he seemed merely the eager lover, anxious, considerate—almost too considerate. He sought a definite promise from her and held out to her on his palm a beautiful ring.

She uttered a word of rapture: "What a beautiful ring! to whom does it belong?"

"To you if you will wear it," he replied

with such meaning that her eye-lashes dropped to hide her own emotion.

He went on hurriedly: "If you put that on I must assume you are willing to take me with it."

She grew very grave as she looked at the little shining thing. "It seems very wonderful to me that you should want me to wear it—that I am here willing to wear it—for I am," she added, flashing into a smile, "for I love you—you know it—" Then before he could touch her hand she shrank back and a faint flush crossed her face, leaving her very pale and very tense. "But I'm afraid—perhaps I ought not to promise anything yet. The future frightens me."

"Why? What do you mean?"

Again the blood flushed her serious face. "I mean," her voice died to a whisper—

" perhaps I ought *never* to marry. My—my weakness may be hereditary. Have you thought of that? "

A look of relief crossed his face. " Yes, I've thought of that. I've given it the deepest study and I'm not afraid." He smiled at her. " You know my creed. There's nothing evil in this world, but thinking makes it so. You need not, you *must* not give any more thought to your trouble. All that we have left behind."

" But my mother——"

He took both her hands in his. " Dear girl, I know what you are thinking, but it isn't true. Your mother's illness and death have no *physical* connection with yours—only your morbid thought connected you—or can connect you in that way. Trust me in this. Take my ring and wear it with all it may mean. I am determined that you

shall be well and happy; I want you to trust me in this as you have in other things, in anything."

Under the power of his words, his voice, his glance, she lifted her lips to his and put her arms about his neck in confident, fullest reliance in his strength.

CHAPTER XI

THE month that followed her acceptance of the ring was one of perfect happiness for her. She had no wish to have him reassume the rôle of healer—she was entirely content with him as lover, and this being made plain to him encouraged him to make peace with himself on that score. He had no rebuke for the press which gave large space to gossip concerning his "approaching nuptials," and though he now knew that his visits to his bride-elect were carefully numbered by the busy-bodies he calmly pursued his way.

He bought ground for a house and ordered the plans sent to Ellice for approval, and when she drew back in dismay of the

magnitude of the architect's estimates, he asked: "Don't you like my plan?"

"It is very beautiful! But can we afford it?"

"We can afford anything that will make you happy," he made answer.

"But this is a palace!"

"Only the best is good enough for you." After a moment he added: "You see, I know you can never live East again, and so I want you to have all the comforts of a palace in Colorado. So long as *The Witch* holds out to burn every desire of your heart shall be gratified."

"I am easily gratified, dearest. I'd rather have you than a palace."

"But you can have me and the palace too, if you will."

She sighed. "I suppose I'll have to put up with both," and then she laughed.

They made the trip to the mine soon after this, and her delicate shining face, her small hand upon his arm deepened his sense of her preciousness and his own rough ways. He refused to take her into the dampness of the mine's deep, but showed her all the processes of sorting and crushing and washing of the big mills. She asked to see Dan and Biddy, and this request gave him a sharper pang of uneasiness than he had yet acknowledged. "They'll be very glad to see you, but you mustn't expect too much of them—Biddy is especially flamboyant—good old soul."

Dan was instant and hearty in his praise of Clement. "Sure, Miss, he's the best man I ever knew. See the work he puts me to. An' me pay!— Ye'll find Biddy upholstered like the parlour chairs and a gold watch in every wan of the vest pockets—

and it's all the boss's work. He took the mine when it was green with deceit and he made it sprout pure gold."

They found Biddy quite as gorgeous as Dan had reported her to be. She was about to make a call on the saloon-keeper's wife (in a green velvet gown and a lace hat), but she sat down in a smother of satisfaction and friendliness and entertained her visitors with stories of her triumphs over her neighbours. "Sure I have them all faded—the very ones that once wrinkled their noses at me—and it's all on account of Mr. Clement —sure it is."

Clement promptly forbade any more talk of that kind, but Ellice interceded and gently encouraged her. She perceived the good heart of the woman, and was able to understand the feeling she had for her hero, who looked so strong, so handsome, and so

distinguished as he sat amid the red and yellow of the parlour furniture.

Mr. Ross had come to have a profound respect for his future son-in-law, and this visit to the mine deepened his sense of Clement's power. "I can't say that he don't make as much of a fool of himself as any prospective bridegroom, but he is a good business man at the same time. He don't lose his head, by any means. It is perfectly certain that he understands his business. He is only reckless when buying things for Ellice. I suspect he'll take care of her and the mine, too."

It was in this period of waiting of service that Eldred entered final suit against Clement to recover his interest in the mine, and the case was entered for the spring term of court. At any other time Clement would have put the summons aside as of no conse-

quence, but now he was both angered and alarmed. To go into court even with the right on his side would expose him to slander and to impudent questions. It would be quite like his opponents to drag Ellice's name into the argument and the very thought of that was intolerable.

On the other hand to compromise with the persistent sneak was to lower himself—to admit that the claim was just and to invite a continuation of the attack, for so long as a dollar could be won Eldred was certain to demand and demand and still demand. "It is diabolical malice to bring suit at this time," he said to Mr. Ross, to whom he went for advice.

"If you have stated the facts correctly, he has no case," declared the merchant.

"Certainly he has no case. I bought his

stock and paid for it out of money drawn from my share of the old homestead. I made every sacrifice to repay him, and I intend to fight him—but I do not like to have Ellice share in any way the anxiety of the fight. Eldred is but a tool in the hands of a powerful clique of men in Denver. Bodovitz has the claim and it is his intentions to make a big 'killing.'"

"Retain a good lawyer and wear them out with postponements. Why not retain Bodovits or whatever his name is—outbid the other man?"

"I'd thought of that," said Clement with an answering smile, "but I despise the man so that I can't do it."

"What can I do for you? I take it you're in no need of money."

"Oh, no, there's nothing you can do except to help me keep the whole complication

from Ellice—and to advise me now and then."

"You need not be alarmed about Ellice; once she understands the situation, it will not trouble her. A woman always sides with the man, especially when he's right."

"I'm glad you feel as I do about the matter. I'm sorry for Eldred and I would do something for him, only he would take that as a sign of weakness, and he and his people would push the harder. The only thing I can do is to keep absolutely clear of him—am I not sound?"

"Perfectly. The other people have made no fight, I understand?"

"Dan and Biddy? No. They are happy and well. Dan is working for me and is as rich as he can stand. He says he sold to me gladly and has no kick coming. He refuses to enter into any combination

against me; that has been a great comfort to me."

And yet for all this reassurance Clement was not at peace with himself. He had fought round the real question at issue, seeking by giving aid to the library and to the various educational institutions of the town, to restore his entire self-respect. The question that would not down was this: "Am I not bound *in honour* to give to Dan and Biddy an equal share in *The Witch?*"

The answer complete and satisfying hitherto had been this: "No, they threw up their interests at a time when the mine was a failure. *I* made it a success—I alone. Besides they have more money than they know how to use now."

But this answer no longer sufficed him. It was true that they had cheerfully sold to

him, but it was in the belief that the ore was too refractory to ever be solved. They knew so little of Clement's resources. "Yes, but they were entitled to your resources. They had given of their slender material stores and time when you were starving. What moral right had you to withhold your mental resources?"

"I did not *know* at the time positively that I could solve the mystery of the ore."

"True, but your inner conviction was clear as a bell. You knew you could solve it in time, and this you withheld from your great-hearted partners."

Ellice perceived the change in him, for he had become moody and changeable even in her presence. This troubled her, and one day she asked:

"What is the matter, Richard? You don't seem yourself to-day."

He brightened at once. "Business is bothering me a little."

"I think you must be working too hard."

"Oh, no! work is a pleasure—now," he answered.

She persisted: "I'm afraid you have been too extravagant about me. That house is so big and costly it frightens me."

"Now don't you get any foolish notions about economy into your head," he answered, genuinely amused, "the mine is getting bigger and richer every day. I'm annoyed by some little things, that's all—nothing important—if they were I would tell you."

"You must always do that," she very gravely admonished him. "I want to feel that I am sharing all your perplexities as well as your good fortune."

Here was the moment to tell her what really troubled him, but he did not. He put it all away and they went for a ride instead.

The wedding day had been set for July, just a year from their first meeting, and this was June and Ellice at least began to regret the swift passing of these, her most beautiful days. Life had been a rapture deep and sweet since her lover came to her and called her back to mental as well as physical health, and she would have been well content to have the days of courtship linger on indefinitely. But to wait was not the man's part, and once when she playfully hinted at a postponement he grew a little savage and quite alarmed. "I can't afford to postpone," he exclaimed, "I'm too old to think of it."

He was disposed to be very generous

during these days, and had Eldred shown the slightest tact or consideration it would have redounded to his advantage, but he did not; on the contrary, he set to work to more closely pursue and to more remorselessly slander Clement. By the promise of large fees he induced his attorneys to make the attack personal. It was not difficult to get certain journals to pass from sly to open censure—they were, however, and happily, the kind of papers which Ellice did not see, and though she read in the better newspapers reference now and then to this unfavourable comment, she gave it little thought, well knowing how easy it was for a public man to be misunderstood.

Dan and Biddy were conspiring with the men in the mines to buy a "whale of a wedding present for the boss," at the same time that Clement was turning over in his

mind a plan to do something more for them —good faithful souls! Dan said to Biddy: "It must be a big dish sure, so that we can have our names all dug into it. Jack Hennesy says a loving cup—but I stand out for a punch bowl. I don't know what a punch bowl is, but 'tis a big dish wid a big broadside fer writin' on—and that's the thing we nade."

"A punch bowl," said Biddy, "is a bowl to drink punch out of."

"Is it so?" replied Dan sarcastically. "I thought it was for punchin' lobsters wid. Anyhow we'll soon know for I'm a committee to go to Denver and bring it back wid me in toime fer the wake—I mean the ceremony."

"Be sure ye bring the punch wid the bowl."

"I will and you be sure to have a civil

tongue when ye meet Hennesy and the rest of the boys," he replied. "'Twill be the biggest bowl in town be-dad!"

On the very day that Dan was in Denver to buy this bowl he met Eldred on the street, and in the innocence of his big Irish heart he asked the little man to subscribe.

Eldred scowled. "You're a fool, Dan McCarty. I'd rather subscribe to a fund to prosecute him for stealing our share of the mine."

Dan's face lost its smile. "There IS a difference bechune us—I may be a fool, but I'm not a villain and that's what you are, and if you ask me to subscribe to YOUR fund I'll break your face." And he passed on, his sunny face clouded with a frown.

Eldred was not a coward—he was rather a rash, intruding fool, for he took train that very day for The Springs to see Clem-

ent personally. Even then had he taken a reasonable tone he would have won some substantial reward, but he did not; he entered the hotel with his small, dark rat-like face set in a portentous frown, and his card to Clement stated that he was present "to talk business."

Clement sent for him to come up, and the fine rooms which he occupied and the air of cultivated leisure which the young miner now possessed seemed to make the little man more intolerantly bitter than ever. He began at once: "I've come to ask you finally what you intend to do about my suit?"

Clement sitting at a big mahogany desk in a big, beautiful room, flushed with anger, but controlling himself replied quietly: "I don't know—let it come to trial probably."

"You daren't let it come to trial. You have got it set over twice and you'll do it again—but if you do I'll appeal through the newspapers."

"Can you say anything that you haven't said?" inquired Clement, his anger rising to dangerous height. "I'm glad you've come in, for I want to say to you that if you don't drop your public abuse of me I will give you a hiding in the street—" Eldred started to speak, but Clement sprang up silencing him. "Not a word. I will not argue this thing with you. If you were a full grown man we would settle it out of court, but as it is you'd better walk out of my room before I pitch you out.'

Eldred retreated, but not in confusion. "You're a big duffer. If you touch me I'll shoot you."

Thereupon Clement lost his control and

with a cuff sent the fellow reeling—then leading him by the ear cast him outside the door and closed it with a bang.

CHAPTER XII

THE final stir, the deciding touch to Clement's conscience came in a curious way a few days before the day set for his wedding and the little journey they expected to make. He was in camp on a final inspection of his mine, and was walking the streets at night, silent, self-absorbed and gloomy. He had grown morbidly self-critical in his thought. "I'm not fit to marry one so angelic, so sweet, so forgiving," he said, all his self-exultant power gone. Like many another man he began to realise the significance of marriage to woman—to comprehend its power to wreck or mar, and he spent far too many hours in going over his faults of omission

as well as those he had actually committed. He was abroad now seeking the distraction which crowds can sometimes bring to one in troubled musing. The thought of Eldred had come to be more and more disturbing—and he wished a hundred times that he had not laid violent hands on the man. He was so small and mean as an antagonist.

The street swarmed with sight-seers and miners. A low, continuous hum of talk could be heard at the base of all other noises, and Clement standing aside from it all, was thinking how far above all this life his beautiful bride was, when the voice of a street orator attracted his attention.

There had been in the camp for some weeks a certain sensational evangelist—a man of some power, but of most unhappy disposition, one who had been in serious

trouble with the city authorities. He had been called a "hypocrite and fake" in the public press, had been prosecuted for disturbance of the peace and threatened by anonymous enemies. But he seemed to thrive on such treatment and each night flung his challenges to the four winds, eager for battle.

Clement had paid very little attention to him and his troubles, but as he looked down the street at the crowd massing at the corner, it occurred to him to wonder if the speaker were "the fighting evangelist."

He was about to move that way when a man and a woman paused near him in the dark middle of the street and seemed to be consulting together.

"This will do as well as anywhere," the fellow said, and putting down a small box mounted it as to a pulpit. He wore

a broad cowboy hat, and a long coat which hung unbuttoned down his powerful figure. The woman, who stood beside him, was tall and slender, and neatly dressed in grey—her face could not be seen, but she carried her head proudly. Clement understood that these were the persecuted ones and his interest was at once aroused. He drew near and waited the coming of the crowd.

The man began to sing in a powerful but not very musical voice, a hymn full of picturesque cowboy allusions. His words, his manner had a quality not usual in street exhorters, and a throng of miners quickly gathered about him. The verses of his song were many and not without a rude poetry, and his audience listened with an interest which covered the delivery of his prayer which was long, and eloquent too, in

its rough diction. He began his address at last by issuing a plain defiance to his enemies. This would mean little in an eastern village, perhaps, but in a mining camp, even a degenerate mining camp, it meant a great deal. Life or death seemed to meet on equal ground as he stood there uttering in vivid and powerful phrase his challenge to the death.

"Now, gentlemen, I want to say something as a preface in order to line everybody up. Some citizen of this town has branded me by anonymous letters in the public press—as a fakir. It wouldn't be healthy for any man to do it openly. So these sneaks hide behind a fence. I want them to know my plain opinion of them. They are liars. I hope 'Doc' is here tonight. I want him to step right up to me if he is. He's my meat. I don't care

about myself. It is only a little difference of opinion between me and a coward, but when he reflects upon the good name of my wife I get red-eyed. Now let me remark right here that any man who says my wife is not a lady and a woman of the highest character, insults the mother of my children, and must answer to me for every word he utters, and no assumed name is going to protect him from my vengeance."

A thrill of deeper interest ran through the crowd. The man's voice had a noble swell in it—a sound that meant battle, battle at the mouth of the pistol. As he towered there in the dim light surrounded by armed men he presented a broad mark for the assassin's bullet. But there was no fear in his attitude. He had come up through a wild life, and knew his audience as well as he knew his accuser and himself.

His voice took a sudden change—it grew tender and sincerely reverent. "My friends, I am here to preach the gospel of Christ and Him crucified. I may not do it in the best way always, but I do it as well as I know how." His voice grew savage again, as he added: "But I shall defend the honour of my wife with my life. I will kill the man who dares to malign her name."

His voice and pose were magnificent—lion-like—and a cheer rose from those who stood nearest him. "Good boy!" shouted some loose-tongued fellow.

The preacher's manner again changed with dramatic suddenness. He now took the whole street into his boyish confidence.

"I love my wife, gentlemen. She has borne three children to me. She is a good woman and a mighty sight smarter and better preacher than I am, but she can't de-

fend herself against sneaks and reptilious liars. I can. That's part of my business. I tell you, boys," he continued in a voice whose tone was very sincere and winning, "they ain't *no* man good enough to marry a good woman; now that's the God's truth; it's just her good, pure, kind heart gives a man any show at all. We're a lot of dirty, noisy coyotes, if anybody rides up and asks you—and I wonder the women put up with us at all. I feel mighty grateful myself. The more I see of men the better I like women. They carry their own troubles and ours too. I tell you the woman that bears a child ought to be free from slander."

A sudden lump rose in Clement's throat. The preacher's deep humility and loyalty and manliness had gone straight to his own heart and touched him in a very sensitive place. "How true it all is! Men go to

women scarred with their battles, malodorous with their toil and their amusements. They demand purity for their baseness, constancy for their fickleness and charity for their selfishness." He turned away and sought the deeper shadow with his head bowed in such despair as Lincoln is reported to have felt in the face of his approaching marriage. The exhorter had brought conviction of soul to one who was already troubled—but not about his future life.

"Oh, God! How pure and dainty and unspotted she is, and I—I am unclean."

He saw now as clearly as if a searching light had been turned in upon his most secret thought, that his ownership of *The Witch* was in question. He had not been entirely candid with his love—he *had* concealed something.

"I had no right to claim her till I had

laid bare everything that was in my mind about that transaction," he accusingly groaned. "I did not *know*, but I was morally certain that wealth was in it. The fact that Eldred is a scoundrel and that Dan and Biddy would be overloaded and perhaps injured by wealth has nothing to do with the inherent justice of the case. I failed to share my conviction with them—in a way I took advantage of their ignorance and their superstition. Legally the mine belongs to me—morally I am now in doubt."

All the way back to the Springs he wrestled with himself about it. He ended by reasserting the justice of his position, and in the resolve to tell Ellice at once the whole story with all his doubts and assumptions and let her judge. He had in his pocket the deed to the new house, which was

to be his wedding present, but this somehow gave him little comfort—on the contrary he could not think of asking her to accept it before passing upon his action in buying in the mine. Once in the Springs he went directly to her.

He found her surrounded with women and gowns and flowers in what seemed to him a chaos of preparation. The women fled when he approached, but the gowns and flowers remained, and he began by jocular comment upon these evidences of " woman's vanity—" but at last in sheer lack of any further cause or excuse for delay he came to the point.

" Ellice, here is something that I want to turn over to you now. It won't be a surprise, but it is my wedding gift," and he placed in her hand the deed of the house.

She looked at it.

"Oh, what a formidable document! What is it?"

"It is the deed to the new house, made out to you."

Her eyes misted with quick emotion. "How good you are to me, Richard! Why do you do this? You are too generous."

"It's only precaution," he replied, as lightly as he could. "This deed insures us a home; that is if you don't lose it in some wild speculation."

She put her arms about his neck, an infrequent caress with her. "You don't need to make such costly presents to me, Dick, but I am glad. I never expected to have so much, you—and the house." Then she added musingly:

"Isn't it nice to know that our good fortune does not come from somebody else's misery? Ore seems different from other

wealth. It comes out of the earth like a spring—like the spring that made me well. That is what makes me happiest. There is no cheated one to be a spectre on our feast —is there, dear?"

As he looked down into her face it seemed lit from within by some heavenly light, and her voice filled him with humbleness and worship—but her sweet words stung him. He found it very difficult to begin upon the words of his confession. He could not bear to think of clouding her happy face and so his resolution failed him and he sat listening to her joyous account of the day.

She observed his silence at last and wished to know what troubled him. Even then he evaded the issue.

"Oh, nothing. I'm a little worried about a—new piece of machinery." This gave him a thought. "And by the way, I must

be away from you this evening on business. I can't take dinner with you after all. I hope you won't miss me in the midst of your dressmakers."

She was not one of those who worry with expostulations or complainings; having a mind of her own, she granted the same liberty of action to others.

"I shall miss you of course," she said, "but I shall also be busy," and she flashed a sudden roguish look at him. "Only—don't forget to breakfast with me!"

He had the grace to return her smile with one almost gay as he said:

"Oh, I'll not forget. I've charged my mind with to-morrow's duty."

"I had hoped it was a pleasure," she retorted.

His going was like a flight. His inner cry was this:

"Till I make restitution I cannot meet her again. I must be absolutely worthy of her. If I am dishonest—I am unfit to touch her hand."

"Saddle Susanna," he phoned sharply to his Mexican hostler. "Put on the heavy saddle—I'm going over the hill."

He returned to his room and there sat with his face buried in his hands shutting out the light of the splendid sunset, seeing only his bride as she sat among her soft silks and dainty flowers. Her lovely eyes and the exquisite texture of her skin grew each day more wonderful to him. The touch of his lips to hers seemed now an act of pollution, almost of envenoming, as he brooded on his unworthiness. When she was sick and hopeless of life or love, he had been bold to offer himself— Now that she was well and an object of adoration, of

seeking on the part of other and better men than himself, he wondered at the arrogance of his first assumptions. "Surely I have rushed in where angels might fear to tread," he groaned and on the impulse of the moment wrote a note to her in which he said:

"I am not fit to see you, to touch you. The reason why I am not to be with you at dinner is this: I am going away across the Divide to make restitution for a dishonest action. Until I do this I cannot face you again. When I see you to-morrow I will be a better man and will be honest with you, and if you think me worthy of forgiveness—but I will see you and ask this question to-morrow.

"RICHARD."

He added as a postscript:

"I am well. I am not crazy, but I am not at peace with myself. I can't kiss you again till I am."

Upon reconsidering this missive he tore it up, and hurrying down to the hotel entrance where his horse stood he leaped into

the saddle with a word to the hostler: "I will not be home till morning, Aglar. You need not wait for me."

The spirited little broncho, fresh and mettlesome, went off in a series of sheeplike bounds which her rider rather welcomed and which made the Mexican smile and say: "He can ride—the señor!"

Clement drew rein at the telegraph office, and there sent three telegrams. They were all alike:

"Meet me at the office of *The Witch* at midnight. Important." One was addressed to Dan, one to his head clerk and one to Eldred.

As he turned Susanna's head up the trail, the mountains stood deep-purple silhouettes against the cloudlessness of the sky. The wind blew from the heights cool and fragrant, and the little horse set her wide nos-

trils to it as if she anticipated and welcomed the hard ride. The way lay over a mountain pass eleven thousand feet above the sea, and her rider was a heavy man, but Susanna was of broncho strain with a blooded sire, which makes the hardiest and swiftest mountain horse in the world. What were thirty miles to her? Her limbs had been formed by races over the hills and her lungs were expanded to this thin air. She moved exultantly.

Clement's mind cleared as he began the ascent—cleared but did not rest. Over and over the problem came, each time clearer and more difficult. He must that night give away one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars—terrible ordeal! Ninety thousand to go to an old Irishman and his wife —both ignorant, careless.

What would they do with it? It might

drive them crazy. As they now lived they were comfortable. Could they take care of more? Would not the big fortune he was about to give them be the ruin of them?

Would it not be better to give them a few thousands—such sum as they could comprehend and take care of? "Dan will quit work and go to pieces as so many others of his type have done under the pressure of too much wealth. Work is the normal life to him and two hundred dollars each month all he can really comprehend and use."

But this was easy compared to the surrender to follow. Then there was another big sum, forty-five thousand dollars to be given to a cheap little rascal—that was hardest of all. "Yes, but" (his conscience argued) "he saved the day. He put in six hundred dollars when every dollar was a ducat. Without him the mine would have

gone to other hands—or be lying undeveloped."

"True, but the reward is too great. Forty-five thousand dollars for six hundred was too much. How will he spend it? He is a man without an ideal—a common vulgar little shop-keeper. To give him such a sum was merely to enlarge the scope of his mean influence."

Oh, yes, this was familiar ground! He had gone over it in a more or less definite way a hundred times, each time reaching an apparently final judgment. It had been quite settled when this slender little woman first lifted her face to his, and now nothing was settled—yes, it was. It was settled that he was to make restitution.

It became very still and very cold as he rode. There was no stream to sing the gorge, and no wind in the pines to answer

should the stream call. Nothing seemed to be stirring save the pensive man and his faithful pony.

Reaching the upper levels he spurred on at a gallop, finding some relief in the monotonous creak of the heather, in the rush of air past his ears. The moon was late, but when it came it seemed to help him, lightening his mood as it illuminated the trail. The big, towering peaks lifted weirdly into the dark sky, their upper edges smooth and graceful and definite as the rims of bubbles. Solid rock seemed melted and transfused with light and air. It was all miraculously beautiful, and the sore-hearted man lifted his eyes to the heights deriving comfort from every moonlit rock and every pine-clad ridge.

By the time he caught the gleam of lights in the camp his mind was settled, his eyes

clear, his brow calm. It was not yet midnight as he entered the office, but he found them all waiting for him.

Dan and Biddy greeted him with cautious constraint, for Eldred had been filling their simple souls with suspicion. "He wants to compromise. He's afraid of our suit against him," said the little man.

As a matter of fact Dan had refused to put a dollar into the suit and yet he was forced to confess that Clement was becoming an "a-ristocrat." And Biddy said "'Tis thrue, he sildom dairkens my dure these days." Nevertheless they had always acknowledged his superiority, his mastery, and as he entered they rose greeting him with hearty hand-clasps. Their confidence miraculously returned at the sight of his face.

He wasted no time in preliminaries.

"Sit down," he said imperiously, and his face, when he turned to the light, was set in lines of determination. He sat for a moment with bent head while he strengthened his heart to a bitter and humiliating task, then abruptly began:

"Dan, you remember the time I brought the amalgam home in a phial and it had turned green?"

"I do. Yis."

"Do you remember how you gave it up right then? Do you remember what you said?"

"I do. I said it's 'witches' gould.'"

"So you did, and sure such it looked like that day," said Biddy. "It scared me, so it did."

"All the same, the thing which scared you put a happy thought into my head. I was something of a chemist and I felt even

then that I could solve it—in fact I *knew* I could. My conviction came from knowledge. Your fear rose from ignorance. In short, I took advantage of your ignorance when I bought in your stock at ten cents on the dollar. I knew it was worth par, for I had already mentally invented a process for treating that ore. That is what I am here to say to you to-night."

There was a silence, a very awesome silence following the defiant ring of the voice. His confession seemed at the moment a kind of challenge.

Eldred was the first to comprehend the full meaning of the confession. His eyes glittered like those of an awakened rat.

"You're a witness to what he says. You hear him. He admits that he robbed us, robbed us cold and clean." He sprang up. "We've got you now! You'll pay me——"

"There was a silence very awesome following the defiant ring of the voice."

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"Sit down," interrupted Clement harshly. "I'm not going to waste any words on you. You're merely incidental. If I had seen fit not to tell you of this how much would you have known of it? Sit down and keep your tongue between your teeth." He turned to Dan and his voice was softer. "Dan, when I was hungry you took me in and fed me. You ruined yourself to stake me. For that I've given you two hundred dollars a month. Is that debt paid?"

"Sure, Clement, me boy, it was only a sup of p'taties an' bacon, annyway. Don't give it anny more thought. 'Tis all settled. I've no kick coming."

Clement turned to Biddy and said:

"Biddy, I turned over two thousand dollars to you, and built you a big new eating-house. You thought that paid the debt I

owed you, didn't you? Your share of the toil and trouble was repaid—so you said."

Biddy was slower to answer. "For all the grub an' the loikes o' that, indade yis, Mr. Clement—but——"

Eldred prompted her. "But we were partners and——"

Clement interrupted. "I know. I'm coming to that. Now answer me. If it hadn't been for me wouldn't you have thrown up the sponge long before you did? How many times did I hunt up means to go on? Wasn't I the original discoverer of the mine? Shouldn't I have been the chief owner under any condition? Dan, you gave up three times and Biddy, you were against it after the first three months, now weren't you?"

The silence of the little group answered him.

"Would any of you ever have worked out the mystery of that ore? Weren't you all anxious to sell for anything you could get?"

They were all silent as before.

"It was I who made the mine productive. I discovered the ore in the first place and solved its treatment. It was an invention like any other and it was mine. I raised money to prosecute my researches by selling my share in the old homestead and I paid you four times what you put into it. I repeat, the mine was worthless until I invented a process for saving the gold. It was exactly as if I had rediscovered it. I claim it as my invention just as a man claims a patent right. In this spirit and understanding I bought in your stock before I had actually solved the problem of the reduction. I believed I was in the right at that time—

to-night I am not so sure; it don't matter how I came to this conclusion, I've changed my mind, that's all you need to know, and I now feel that I would rather err on the side of generosity than lie under the suspicion of having gone back on my partners. I want my career to be above accusation. I have come to-night to end all doubt. I am ready to pay you ninety cents more on every dollar of stock you sold me at that time."

Biddy gasped: "Howly Saints!"

Dan leaped up with a wild hurrah. "Listen to that now!" he cried, as he shook Clement's hand. "Ye're the whitest man that iver stepped green turf."

Clement sat coldly impassive and unsmiling.

"You'll be satisfied with that, will you, Dan?"

"Satisfied!" shouted the foreman. "Satisfied is it, man? Indade I'm crazy wid the joy of it."

"And you, Biddy?"

Biddy was weeping and muttering wild Irish prayers. "Mother o' God preserve us! Dan, dear, do ye understand, it's forty-five thousand dollars apiece to the two of us —Oh, the blessed heart! Oh, it's too good to be true—we must be dramin'. What will we do with it all?"

Clement looking upon the distracted man and woman expanded and warmed with a return of his self-righteousness. "I was right after all. It will be the ruin of these poor souls." He turned to Eldred, who sat in silence.

"What have you to say?"

Eldred sneered. "I say you can't fool me. These shares are worth a dollar and

eighty cents in the market. I want their market value, not their par value. I demand a quarter of the *present* value of *The Witch.*"

Clement's brow darkened and his eyes burned with a fierce steady light. "Demand! You talk largely. You have always been modest in your pretensions. If I served you right I'd kick you out of the door and let you do your worst. You can't recover one dollar from me by any process of law. You have no basis for such a demand and your threats to sue for recovery haven't a straw's weight with me. My reasons for putting up with your insolence and repeating my offer are due to considerations which you could not comprehend. Now listen carefully. I will pay you forty-five thousand dollars and not one cent more. The market value of *The Witch* to-day I

have made by my management. I have gone on improving the mine week by week. As it stands it is a new property, and you have no claim upon it. You were a quarter owner in *The Biddy*. We capitalised *The Biddy* at your own suggestion at two hundred thousand dollars, because we wanted it big enough to cover all possible values. When I render you your share of that sum I am doing you full justice. Conly," he said turning to the cashier, "make out three cheques for forty-five thousand dollars each to these three individuals and prepare three receipts in full of account."

The scratching of the cashier's fateful pen was the only sound that broke the silence for some time, and when Conly extended the first cheque and called "Mrs. McCarty," she went up and timidly took it in her hands. "Is that little slip o' white

paper really worth all that money?" she asked doubtfully.

"Call at the bank and get the gold when you want it," said the imperturbable cashier.

Dan studied his cheque, his face foolish with joy. "Howly saints, phwat will I do wid it?"

"Give it to me, Dan, I'll buy a new house in the Springs wid it."

Eldred said: "I take my cheque as part payment only. I'm going to use it to get the rest of what you owe me. I serve notice of that right now."

Clement interposed. "You'll sign a release of all claims on me before you take your cheque. Conly, make out a paper to that effect."

Eldred grew purple with wrath. "I refuse to accept it."

Clement coolly replied: "You'd better consider; forty-five thousand dollars is a good deal of money."

The little man struggled over the question while Dan begged him to take it and Biddy plainly said: "'Tis more money than you'll ever see again."

At last he yielded and as he signed and took the cheque, he said: "This puts money into my hands to fight for my rights."

"Get out," said Clement sternly, and Eldred went out with an evil final word.

When the door closed on him Clement's face lost its sternness, and he became both sad and tender.

His restitution was not yet complete. His mind was clear about the man who came in at the eleventh hour, but it was not clear with regard to these true-hearted old

friends who had been with him from the first.

He recalled the time when Dan's big arm had helped him to a chair, and Biddy had put the steaming soup before him—food worth all the gold in the world at that moment. He recalled her broad, kindly face, hot and shining from the stove; he remembered their share in his struggles, their sacrifices for the mine, and a new and sweeter tone was in his voice as he called to Biddy who had risen to go home:

"Wait a moment, Biddy. Sit down a moment, and you, too, Dan. I want to talk over old times with you."

They came back slowly and took seats, awed by the change in his voice and by the look on his face.

"Biddy, do you remember the money you squandered on the lottery ticket?"

A slow smile broadened her face. "I do, Mister Clement—and I remember I won the prize, sure!"

"So you did, and at the moment saved all our lives. Dan, do you remember the day we lost our last five-dollar gold piece on the hill?"

Dan slapped his knee. "Do I? I wore me fingers raw as beef combin' the grass that day."

A musing smile came to Clement's face. "Ah, those were great days! We had times when ninety cents would have made us joyous, and here you are with ninety thousand dollars, and wishin' for more."

Dan smiled broadly. "Sure, that's no lie. 'Tis human nature bedad."

"Spake for yourself, ye miser," said Biddy. "I have enough—too much. My heart misgives me for it. I'm afraid of all

this gould. I'm scared to carry it away wid me."

"You're safe, Biddy; nobody will steal your piece of paper. Your trouble will come after it goes to the bank," Clement reassured her.

"Dan, you believed in me in those days—give me that cheque."

Dan slowly handed to him the cheque. Clement took it and turned. "Biddy, you fed me when I was starving, and you pawned everything you had to 'grub-stake' me—give me your cheque." She handed it to him without hesitation. "I want you to trust me now. Do you?"

"Av coorse we do," said Biddy.

"Gwan wid ye!" said Dan.

Clement tore the cheques in little pieces while the two owners sat in amaze and a chill of fear. "Now you are each a quar-

ter owner in *The Witch,*" said Clement. "As we shared and shared alike in the old days when we hadn't a dollar, so now we'll share alike when *The Witch* is giving us gold in a stream. So hurrah for *The Witch!*"

Nobody shouted, nobody spoke. Biddy was weeping, with one arm flung around her husband's neck. Dan sat nervously turning his hat over and over in his hands staring hard at Clement's face, intent to understand his motive. It was all too high, too wonderful for his imagination to seize upon. Biddy understood it by reason of the tremor in the big mine owner's voice, and her love for him swept away the last shred of the suspicion Eldred had put into her heart.

Clement did not speak again for some moments and when he did his voice was deep

and his words musical with emotion. "You notice I say *quarter* interest, Biddy—that's because there is to be a new member in the firm. She comes in to-morrow. You remember I take a wife to-morrow." This gave Dan a new thought. "We do and we have a present for her."

A smile of admiration broke through the red of Biddy's broad countenance.

"Sure we know all about it, Mister Clement. Didn't she call upon me, beautiful as one of the saints in the church?"

Her husband resented this. "She's none too good for him."

"Don't say that, Dan!" Clement protested most earnestly. "All I've done to-night you can thank her for. All the best thoughts in me to-day I owe to her."

"Then praise be to her," said Biddy, and she suddenly flung her arm around his neck

and gave him a hearty smack. "There, now! tell her of that if you dare!"

"I'm going back to-night to tell her every word of this," he said, "and when we get back from our wedding trip you must come down and take dinner with us and we'll plan the future of *The Witch* together."

"May the saints smile on ye both," Biddy fervently exclaimed, "and may your childer be as strong as their father and as beautiful as their mother—God bless her!"

"Amen to that, Biddy—and now good night and pleasant dreams."

"Dreams! Not one wink o' sleep will I get this night."

And so they parted with the stars overhead and the silent town below.

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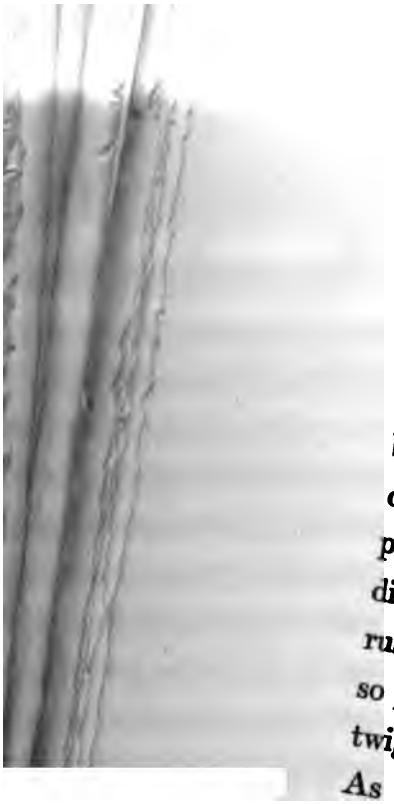
things." In such wise, though less definitely, he planned his new life.

Leaving Susanna at the barn he saddled a fresh horse and set off, riding fast toward the east. The wind had risen and was blowing from the dim domes of the highest mountains—a cold wind, and he would have said a sad wind had his heart been less light. As it was, he was fortified against it and lifted a bared forehead to it exultantly, putting behind him, so far as in his power lay, all regret of the great wealth he had given away. He galloped on, glad to feel the strong heart of the horse beneath him, eager to pour out the story of his night's ride, eager to hear his bride say: "Well done, Richard."

Over and over again his thought ran: "Now my hands are clean. My mind is at rest. I am not worthy of her of course



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stretching away in dim splendour, like a motionless sea of pale gold and purple, the sun rolled above the horizon line a mighty gleaming chariot wheel, red-gold and burnished, and the beauty and joy of the world reasserted its dominion over him. The wonder of each day's return came to him as to a little child.

The valley seemed lonely and barren of life, so far below was it. All human action and presence was lost in the mist of immensity—houses were of the stature of ant hills, men of the value of aphides—but he thought not so. "Down there in the pathway of the morning is the sweetest woman of all this world waiting for me," he sang, the lover rising superior to the cynic.

As he rode into the town, the sun was swinging, big in blazing splendour, high above the horizon, and the citizens of the

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He went to her with the heart of a boy, the presence of an athlete. He was at the prime of his robust manhood, and even an all-night ride could not humble the physical pride of his bearing. No one could have guessed his night's adventure from his looks.

She took joy in his comely strength and met him more than half way in tender greeting. Her face was still slender and delicate of colour, but in her eyes was a serene brightness, and her lips were tremulous with happiness as she led him to the little table. "Now you mustn't call this a real breakfast," she smilingly explained. "This is just a bite to sustain us through our ordeal. We are to breakfast immediately after the ceremony."

"I've eaten one breakfast already this morning."

She looked dismayed. "Have you!"

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wife can't remember how many lumps of sugar her husband takes."

"But we're not going to travel very far, are we? You ought not to go out of Colorado. I thought we were to take a little trip of a day or two and return to our new house which I have made ready at the point of the bayonet."

"I was only being funny, you serious boy," she answered. "But you are not eating. What is the matter? I'm afraid you ate a real breakfast at the hotel."

He felt his courage oozing away, and in despair of any delicate approach abruptly began:

"Dearest, I have a story to tell and a confession to make to you before I can eat."

She was a little startled by his change of manner. "That sounds ominous, Richard

—like the husband in the problem play, only he makes his confession after marriage."

He was very grave indeed now. "That is the reason why I make my explanation now. I can't ask you to take me without a fuller knowledge of me. I have told you a good deal but not all. There is still a dark spot in my business career."

She leaned her chin on her clasped hands and looked at him with clear, calm, confident eyes. "Tell me all about it. I am not afraid to hear anything you tell me in that spirit."

He did so. He began at the beginning, and while it would not be true to say that he was unsparing of himself (no man tells all his faults) he nevertheless told the story of the mine as it actually happened. He concealed no essential, and he ended by saying: "All I did was *legal* but I now see

that it was not just. As I came to measure it by your standards I grew uneasy. You would have shared your conviction with Dan and Biddy had you been in my place. You would not have taken advantage of their ignorance—would you? Well, last night I came to a knowledge of my fault. I could not sleep till I had made my peace with my conscience, so I rode to the mine and restored my self-respect by turning over to Dan and Biddy and Eldred their full share of *The Biddy*. I couldn't kiss you again until I had made myself an honest man. It came hard to put into the hands of my only enemy the means to continue his fight against me—but I did it upborne by thought of you."

She reached and took his hand—a sudden convulsive tender action. "You did this last night?"

"Yes, I've been to the camp since I left you last night. I couldn't stand with you before all our friends, and ask you to wear my ring till I could say I had no other man's money in my pockets."

She patted his hand. "Poor boy, you must be tired."

He sighed with sweet relief. "But I am square with the world now. Dan and Biddy are equal partners with us in *The Witch*—and they are both very happy."

She lifted his hand and touched her cheek to his fingers. She was very deeply moved. "You did that because of me?"

And he—though his voice choked—faltered through:

"'Yes, I gave it all back, to make my peace with you—and because it was right. You had made me see that. I gave over to Biddy and Dan their full share. I tried to

withhold some of it; it was hard to give it all—I will admit that; but I did it because I believed you would approve of it."

"It was a splendid thing to do," she said. "Not many men would have done it I fear."

"They couldn't help it if they had a wife like you to help them to be honest. Your eyes were my accusers. I was only trying to make myself worthy you. Will you marry me now? Will you trust yourself to me?"

For answer she rose and came to his side and put her arms about his neck and laid a kiss on his anxious upturned face. "It is beautiful to think that I influenced you—but—I'm sure that your own heart has prompted you to be honest just for the sake of being honest. You are one of the greatest men I have ever known."

He touched his lips to her hand which lay on his shoulder. "I did see the justice of it —but I hadn't the moral courage to go to them and say so—the moving inspiration came from you."

"Well, it's all settled and now we must begin to dress for our ceremony."

"Don't call it that!" he exclaimed with startled face. "It was to be strictly private——"

She laughed. "So it is—but it's a ceremony nevertheless."

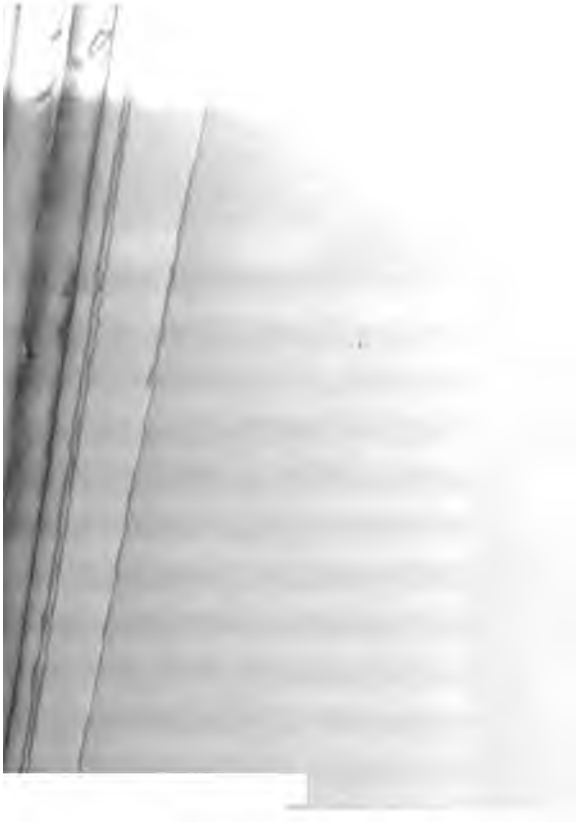
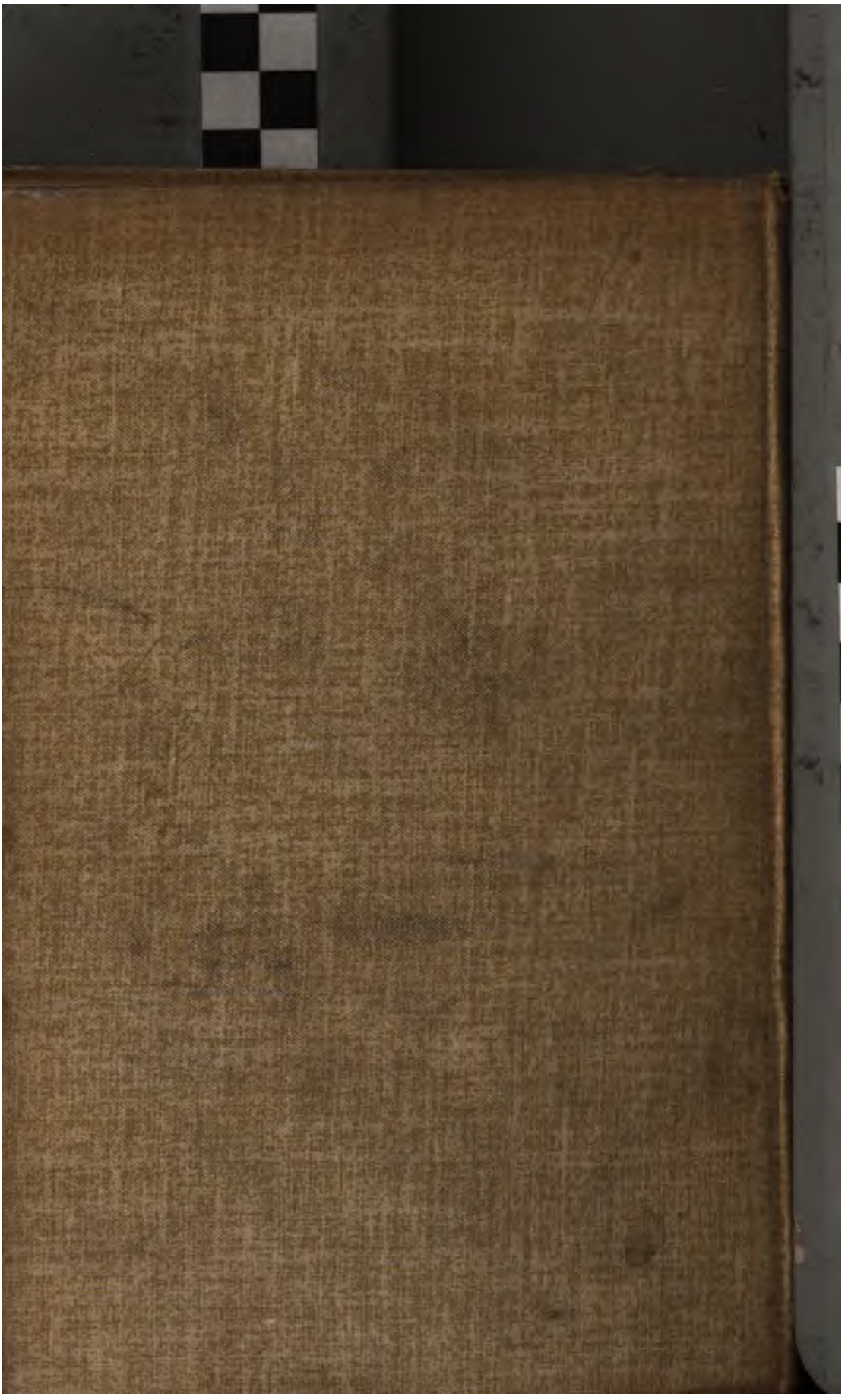
* * * * * *

The big bowl from Dan's committee occupied a place of honour among the wedding presents and Ellice was much touched by its significance.

"The good faithful Dan! We must have him and Biddy to dinner some day."

"They shall be the first to break bread in our new house," he answered with tender gravity.

THE END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